



# City of Culver City

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## Staff Report

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**File #:** 16-1202, **Version:** 1

**Item #:** PH-1.

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**PC: Administrative Site Plan Review, P2017-0062-ASPR, Tentative Parcel Map, P2017-0062-TPM, and an Exception to the Subdivision Design Standard for the Development of a 4-Unit Townhome Style Subdivision at 4118 Wade Street.**

**Contact Person/Dept:** Jose Mendivil, Associate Planner / CDD  
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**Phone Number:** (310) 253-5757 / (310) 253-5727

**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 project site (06/21/17); (Sign) Posted on the site (06/21/17); (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - Planning Commission (06/21/17); (Posted) City Website (6/21/17).

**Department Approval:** Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (06/29/17)

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission 1) Adopt a Categorical Exemption pursuant to CEQA Section 15332, Class 32, In-Fill Development Projects, finding that there are no potentially significant adverse impacts on the environment; 2) Approve Administrative Site Plan Review, P2017-0062-ASPR and Tentative Parcel Map, P2017-0062-TPM, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2017-P012 (Attachment No. 1); and 3) Recommend to the City Council approval of an exception to a Subdivision Design Standard (CCMC Section 15.10.700.C).

### **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 March 30, 2017, Ben Adams Studio (Applicant) submitted an application for an Administrative Site Plan Review and Tentative Parcel Map to allow the development of four detached townhome style residential units.

Existing Conditions

The site, located on the east side of Wade Street between Washington Boulevard and Culver West Park, is approximately 330 feet north of the park and 730 feet south of Washington Boulevard (See Attachment No. 2 - Vicinity Map). The site is generally flat in topography, rectangular in shape, with approximate dimensions of 70 feet in width by 176 feet in depth. The site has a single story, triplex building with a detached carport and garage structure in the rear. A garage attached to the triplex structure was illegally converted to a fourth unit. All structures on the site are proposed to be demolished. The developer/property owner previously entered into a covenant with City to correct code violations on the property. The illegal fourth unit will be converted back to a garage if the project is approved or if it is denied and the project is not developed.

Project Description

The four (4) proposed dwelling units are designed as detached two-story structures atop a semi-subterranean driveway and parking garage level that will project a maximum of three (3) feet above grade, with a maximum overall height of 28 feet from natural grade. Parking for all units and the one required guest parking space will be covered; three units will have their own 2-car garage and the rear unit and guest space will be located in a carport at the rear. The dwellings are arranged in a linear pattern from the front of the parcel to the rear (from west to east) and each unit will be accessed from individual private patios at the 1<sup>st</sup> level deck on the south side of the site. Additionally all units will have direct access from the semi-subterranean garage level.

Data for each unit is listed in the table below;

	Unit 1 (Front)	Unit 2 (Middle)	Unit 3 (Middle)	Unit 4 (Rear)
Unit Size (Habitable Area)	1,805 sq.ft.	1,782 sq.ft.	1,782 sq.ft.	1,913 sq.ft.
Bedrooms	3	3	3	3
Bath*	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
Private Open 1 <sup>st</sup> floor	544.8 sq.ft.	544.8 sq.ft.	544.8 sq.ft.	1,188 sq.ft.
Private Open 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	60 sq.ft.	60 sq.ft.	60 sq.ft.	39 sq.ft.
Private Open Roof Terrace	414 sq.ft.	414 sq.ft.	414 sq.ft.	468 sq.ft.
Private Storage**	1,279 cu.ft.	1,279 cu.ft.	1,279 cu.ft.	1,279 cu.ft.

\* Three units also have a half bath in the semi-subterranean storage area.

\*\* This is a minimum cubic area per unit; some units have more storage space.

The project will include a six foot wide offer of dedication to the City for future, planned widening of Wade Street. Density for this project is based on net lot area after the six foot wide dedication.

Surrounding Area/General Plan/Zoning

The surrounding area includes a mix of one and two story single family dwellings and multi-family apartment and condominium dwellings. There is a higher concentration of multi-family dwellings north of the project site and single family, duplex, and triplex dwellings south of the site. The site's General Plan Land Use Element designation is a Low Density Multiple Family and the site is zoned Residential Low Density Multiple (RLD). Surrounding zoning and existing land uses are outlined below (Wade Street is considered north/south orientated):

<u>Location</u>	<u>Zoning</u>	<u>Land Use</u>
West:	RLD	1 & 2 story single & multi-family dwellings.
East:	R1	1 story (with some 2-story) single-family dwellings
North:	RLD	1 and 2 story multi-family dwellings (1-family directly north)
South:	RLD	1 & 2 story single, duplex, & triplex dwellings

**ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION:**

The RLD Zone allows 1 unit per 2,904 square feet of net lot area. Based on the net lot area of 11,900 square feet, a maximum of 4 units may be allowed on the site and the applicant is proposing 4 units. As illustrated in the Project Summary (Attachment No. 3), the proposed development conforms to all regulations of the RLD Zone.

Administrative Site Plan ReviewArchitectural Design

The structures are designed in a modern style with straight lines and multiple planes positioned at right angles creating articulated facades. Building surfaces will be comprised of large rectangular and square glazing and white colored plaster finish walls. At various sections along the dwelling exteriors, grey lumber cladding and white perforated metal sheets will be applied to plaster finishes creating a tri surface look of grey wood, white plaster, and white metal exteriors. Grey plaster at the base of the various dwellings along with the grey lumber cladding will provide a color contrast opposing the whit plaster and white metal sheets. Balcony terrace railing will be comprised of either the grey lumber cladding or the metal sheets while roof top terrace railing material will be mainly the metal finish. Roof top decks are set in from the rood edges beyond the setback limits and are bounded by the metal railing noted above as well as roof top mechanical equipment. These perimeter features enhance privacy for the both project residents and neighboring properties because they obscure line of site in both directions. The project massing is broken up by the separation of the project into 4 townhome style dwellings that conform to the 30 foot maximum height limit for the RLD zone. Perimeter landscaping and extensive ground level decking within the RLD Zone's large setback areas (10 feet from the sides and 15 feet from the rear) along with the use of articulated surfaces and multiple material elements noted above further break up the massing of the project. The proposed semi-subterranean garage is accessed by a 12 to 13 foot wide driveway and the entry into the first garage is set back approximately 32 feet from the front property line, thus minimizing the visual impact of the off-street parking. Overall, the design of the proposed project is deemed to be compatible with other residential structures in the neighborhood and the building height and massing is consistent with the zoning standards of the RLD Zone.

Neighborhood Compatibility

Staff asked the applicant to apply the neighborhood typology principles of the Multifamily Design Guidelines to the project. In accordance with the principals of the Multifamily Design Guidelines, the applicant positioned glazing so that it would not directly align with neighboring property windows, designed the semi- subterranean parking with individual garages minimizing the visual impacts of the driveway and garage, and designed only one driveway at the north side thereby maximizing street fronting landscape areas. The front entrances are facing the south side property line, however these entrances are stepped back beyond the required 10 foot side setback resulting in 13 to 15 feet from the front door to the south facing property line. There are four existing loquat trees along the south side that will remain providing additional privacy for both project users at their front entrances and the residents directly south of the project

Below is a neighborhood typology comparison, provided by the applicant, of the project against properties along Wade Street:

Guideline Variable	Project	Average	Prevailing
Lot Coverage	43%	38%.	21-60%.
Lot Coverage with Project Roof Terrace	14%	38%	21-60%.
Building Height	28 ft./2 stories	24 ft	2 stories
Front Setback*	42 ft.	46.ft.	40-50.ft.
Units Pattern**	4 Dwellings		16 lots - 3 or less units/ 12 lots - 4 or more units

\* Measurements are taken from the street centerline due to varying property lines created over the years with Offers of Dedication to the City for future, planned widening of Wade Street.

\*\* The Code allows up to 4 units for this lot.

The Multifamily Design Guidelines are intended to be used as a baseline to inform the design of the project to ensure compatibility in scale and massing with other buildings on the block and on adjacent lots. The goal is to make sure that new structures are not out of scale with the block and adjacent parcels. Overall the project is compliant with Multifamily Design Guideline principles; its massing is reduced among the 4 detached dwellings and private entrances are set back at least 13 feet from the neighboring property. The overall height of 28 feet is taller than the majority of the buildings on the block where the average height is 24 feet and. In this regard, the guidelines would dictate that the height of the project be closer to the height of the structures on the block at the front elevation. This can be achieved by stepping back the building and creating articulation. The applicant has designed the project with a setback from the center line of the street of 42 feet which is within the prevailing range of 40 to 50 feet. In addition the 28 foot high buildings each occupy a small building footprint and the 4 unit dwelling units on the lot are less dense than 6 unit developments on other lots on Wade Street. The design of the project is distinguished from the majority of older apartments and single family homes along Wade Street. However, the project incorporates architectural features and materials that break-up the massing and bulk of the development and with landscaping, make the project compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

### Landscaping and Open Space

The landscape plan proposes 21 shade trees located along the site's perimeter and within the first level 10 foot wide decks separating the units from each other. Four of the trees are existing to remain mature

Loquats and the rest will be newly planted. They will include 36 inch box Madrone, 48 inch box Lacebark Elm and 60 inch box Sycamores. There are five additional existing six inch trees that will be removed due to poor health. Landscaped areas will include trees shrubs, grasses, and mulch. There will be planter boxes with ground cover and shrubs within the 10 foot wide ground floor decks as well as on the roof top decks. The driveway along the north side will be made of permeable pavers and crushed gravel joints allowing for water to percolate into the ground. The project is subject to the City's Street Tree Master Plan and will provide street tree and parkway landscape improvements. The existing and new trees and the new street trees will provide screening for both project residents and adjoining properties and will help to soften any sense of massing that may exist.

In the RLD a minimum of 100 square feet of open space is required per unit. As noted in the project description data table above and below each unit provides more than the minimum open space requirement.

	Unit 1 (Front)	Unit 2 (Middle)	Unit 3 (Middle)	Unit 4 (Rear)
Private Open 1 <sup>st</sup> floor	544.8 sq.ft.	544.8 sq.ft.	544.8 sq.ft.	1,188 sq.ft.
Private Open 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	60 sq.ft.	60 sq.ft.	60 sq.ft.	39 sq.ft.
Private Open Roof Terrace	414 sq.ft.	414 sq.ft.	414 sq.ft.	468 sq.ft.
Total	1,018 sq.ft.	1,018 sq.ft.	1,018 sq.ft.	1,695 sq.ft.

Private open spaces for each unit include first floor (10 foot wide) private decks separating units from each other, small second level terrace balconies, and open-to-the-sky roof top decks that include seating and fire pits. Within the first level decks there are recessed courtyards for outdoor seating adjacent to the living rooms for each unit. These recessed outdoor seating areas are surrounded on three sides by the unit they serve thereby proving privacy for each family within the development. There are no shared or common outdoor spaces/

#### Traffic, Parking, and Circulation

The Engineering Division determined Duquesne Avenue, which is 56 feet wide, to be adequate in width to serve the site and the proposed development. As required for all new development on Wade Street, the project will require a six foot wide dedication for future widening of Duquesne Avenue. The City has not yet scheduled the widening of Wade Street and not all properties along the street have dedicated the first six feet of their lots. In the meantime, the dedication area will be used as a front lawn. The curb, gutter, sidewalk, and driveway approach along the project's frontage will be removed and replaced; the driveway will be shifted from the south to the north side of the project.

The code requires eight (8) parking spaces for four (4) units (2 per unit) and one (1) guest space; nine (9) spaces are provided. The common driveway will provide vehicular access to the off-street parking located in the semi-subterranean garage. The garages include the code required minimum width, length, and overhead clearance. A minimum code required 24 foot back-up drive aisle is provided allowing a sufficient turning radius and circulation area to maneuver in and out of each parking stall, thereby exiting in a forward manner onto Wade Street. An at-grade pedestrian walkway on the south side allows residents to enter off of the sidewalk and into the entrance patios of each unit. The parking level is semi-subterranean extending about three (3) feet above grade; residents must step up into the patio entrances except the last unit that will have a disabled access ramp.

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. The required guest parking is provided. According to the Institute of Transportation Engineers 9<sup>th</sup> Edition Trip Generation Manual, the project is expected to generate 3.08 trips in the AM Weekday Peak Hour and 4.08 trips in the PM Weekday Peak Hour. These expected trips are below the 50 or more trip generation threshold in the AM or PM peak which would trigger a traffic study. Overall the density of the development will not generate significant traffic impacts.

#### Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA)

This project will address a portion of Culver City's share of the RHNA by constructing one net market rate dwelling unit. This will further the intent of the 5<sup>th</sup> 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

The project location near transit stops and bicycle friendly streets will provide mobility options for the residents. Sustainability concerns will be addressed with the project's inclusion of infrastructure for future electric vehicle charging stations in all four garage stalls and four bicycle parking spaces per unit. Applicable green building code requirements will also apply. The Project is situated 760 feet south of bicycle routes and paths along Washington Boulevard. The route connects to other local and regional bicycle routes, lanes and friendly streets. The Venice Boulevard Bicycle Lane which connects to the Metro Exposition Light Rail Culver City Station (Culver City Expo Light Rail Station) is an additional 0.33 miles north of the intersection of Washington Boulevard and Wade Street. The project is about 0.86 miles from Culver City Bus Line 1 Washington Boulevard and Inglewood Boulevard stop and about 1.03 miles from Line 1 Washington Boulevard and Lincoln Boulevard stop. Line 1 connects to Venice Beach on the west and to Downtown Culver City, the Culver City Expo Light Rail Station, and the West L.A. Transit Center to the east. The project is also about 0.86 miles from Culver City Bus Line 2 Washington Boulevard and Inglewood Boulevard stop. This line connects to Venice High School and to Westfield Culver City. Both Culver City bus lines connect to other local and regional bus lines and rail lines including Culver City Rapid Line 6 which travels between UCLA and L.A.X./Aviation Green Line Park and Ride.

#### Tentative Parcel Map

The State Subdivision Map Act and CCMC Chapter 15.10 regulate land subdivisions and require the submittal of a tentative parcel map for subdivisions. 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. However this section also states that condominium, townhome, or planned development projects may be subdivided with smaller parcel sizes for ownership purposes, with the minimum lot area determined through the subdivision review process, provided that the overall development site complies with the minimum lot size requirements of the Zoning Code. The overall project will maintain its current 12,320 square foot lot area with a reduction to 11,900 square feet after a six (6) foot dedication for future widening of Wade Street. The overall 70 foot lot width will not change and the overall lot length of 176 feet will be reduced to 170 feet after the six (6) foot dedication noted above. The overall project lot configuration - area, width, and length will comply with the RLD development standards. Four (4) small land lots for townhome style development will be created within the existing conforming lot through the subdivision process

A main objective of the tentative parcel map process is to allow the City to review the proposed subdivision to ensure all necessary improvements and requirements are provided. The Public Works Department has reviewed the tentative parcel map (Attachment No. 5) for the proposed 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. However except for the street fronting lot, the other three lots will not have the City Subdivision standard minimum street frontage of a 10 foot stem each (for adjoining lots that provide street frontage through a stem or flag (CCMC Section 15.10.700.C). City Subdivision ordinance section 15.10.085 provides an exception process if the Planning Commission determines that conditions affecting the site warrant such exceptions to portions of the Subdivision ordinance. The Commission makes findings and recommends approval of the exception to the City Council.

The Project is providing a 10 to 12 foot wide driveway easement for all four lots on which the dwellings will be located. If the project were a standard condominium or townhome development wherein all four units are attached, the project as designed would not require an exception. In condominium or townhome developments the driveway along with the land surrounding the units are held in common and vehicular access easements would be secured through the condominium association Covenants, Restrictions, and Conditions (CC&Rs). CCMC Section 15.10.700.C requiring street frontage or street frontage for land lots through a stem or flag with a minimum 10 foot wide stem for adjoining lots is more applicable to single family lots. This project is consistent in design and function with condominium and attached townhome developments. The key difference is that each resident will own the dwelling as well as the land around it as opposed to all four residents owning the land around the dwellings in common. The Project is consistent in design and function with condominium and attached townhome developments. The 70 foot lot width does not allow for three 10 foot wide stems because the driveway would be 30 feet wide, diminishing the ability to provide a viable living space. The exception findings are in the Resolution No. 2017-P012 (Attachment No.1)

#### Subdivision Design Standard Exception

Pursuant to CCMC Section 15.10.085, the applicant is requesting an exception to the subdivision requirements, because conditions affecting the Project warrant and require that an exception be made to CCMC Section 15.10.700.C. Except for the street fronting lot, the Project's lots do not front on a dedicated public street and cannot accommodate the City Subdivision standard minimum of a 10 foot stem each for stems which are contiguous for 50% or more of their length (CCMC Section 15.10.700.C) as noted above.

An exception may only be made if it is not an exception to any requirement of the Subdivision Map Act. The requested exception does not violate the Subdivision Map Act because a 10 to 12 foot wide easement for common driveway purposes is provided assuring public right-of-way access for each lot within the development. All required subdivision findings can be made for the Project and all required vehicular, pedestrian, and utility/drainage easements will be made a part of the final map assuring the four lots have required access to the public right-of-way. Also the project site containing the four small lots, as a whole, complies with RLD development standards such as setbacks, height, parking, internal separation between dwellings, and open space, thereby resulting in no impacts to adjacent and surrounding residents. This exception will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare nor injurious to the property or improvements in the immediate vicinity. For these reasons, findings can be made that the conditions affecting the property warrant and require that an exception be made to the requirement for public street frontage and the minimum stem size required for access to the public street via a flag lot. If the Planning Commission approves the requested exception, it will be subject to final approval by the City Council.

#### Public Outreach

As part of the project review process, two community meetings were held on Tuesday, January 31, 2017 and Tuesday, June 6, 2017, both at 7:00 pm, at Culver West Park. The applicant invited interested persons to learn about the development project, provide comments and feedback, and share any concerns regarding the proposed project. Approximately four people who live in the immediate neighborhood attended both community meetings. A summary of the meetings are provided below:

January 31, 2017 Meeting. Attendees commented about construction timing, concerns about construction hours and construction on weekends, landscaping, whether or not a traffic study was done, and the street dedication; the applicant provided responses. There was no apparent opposition to the project.

June 6, 2017 Meeting. Based on the absence of opposition from the previous community meeting, the applicant did not revise the project. Attendees commented about setbacks and were pleased with the large RLD required setbacks. Other issues included maintenance of the site currently, the construction timeline, wanting to see the project start as soon as possible, drought tolerant landscaping, unit sale price, the rear setback and privacy issues, distance of roof decks to setback lines and roof deck screening, parking, and concern over modern style and acknowledgement that such a style is in demand. Similar to the first community meeting residents did not oppose the project and were pleased that a development was planned for the site. They wanted to ensure their concerns were heard.

More detailed notes provided by the applicant are included in Attachment No.6.

#### Comments Received During Public Comment Period

As of the writing of this report, staff has not received any written public comments on the proposed project.

#### **CONCLUSION/SUMMARY:**

This is a unique project for Culver City in that it is providing townhome style development on separate land lots instead of constructing the more common condominium type on a lot with airspace units. The architect designed a project that is compatible with the neighborhood and the immediately abutting properties. The applicant followed staff direction to ensure compliance with specific Code requirements and the spirit and intent of the design guidelines including unit separation, massing towards the center of each unit, and analysis of neighborhood typologies. The project's massing is not as dense as other multi-family developments on the same street, provides its code required parking, and respects the prevailing scale and development patterns of the neighborhood. As noted, the Zoning Code permits this type of subdivision and the project results in less impacts to the neighborhood and to the environment than impacts from higher density projects on the same street.

Based on the proposed preliminary development plans and recommended conditions of approval, staff considers the project as compatible with the surrounding neighborhood; adequately served by public facilities; and, consistent with the General Plan, Zoning Code, and all CCMC and State subdivision requirements. Staff believes the findings for Administrative Site Plan Review, P2017-0062-ASPR, Tentative Parcel Map, P2017-0062-TPM, and the exception to subdivision design standards can be made as outlined in Resolution No. 2017-P012 (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 project has been determined to be Categorically Exempt pursuant to CEQA Section 15332, Class 32 - In-Fill Development Projects. The Project is consistent with the General Plan and Zoning Code; is located within Culver City on a lot less than five acres; is located on a site with no endangered species; is not expected to create significant traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality impacts; and is located on a site that can be serviced by all required utilities.

### **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 Planning Commission Resolution No. 2017-P012 and Exhibit A Conditions of Approval
2. Vicinity Map
3. Project Summary
4. Preliminary Development Plans dated April 28, 2017
5. Tentative Parcel Map No. 74956
6. Applicant Summary of Community Meetings

### **MOTION**

That the Planning Commission:

- 1) Adopt a Categorical Exemption pursuant to CEQA Section 15332, Class 32, In-Fill Development Projects, finding that there are no potentially significant adverse impacts on the environment;
- 2) Approve Administrative Site Plan Review, P2017-0062-ASPR and Tentative Parcel Map, P2017-0062-TPM, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2017-P012; and
- 3) Recommend to the City Council approval of an exception to a Subdivision Design Standard (CCMC Section 15.10.700.C).