



City of Culver City

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Staff Report

File #: 18-0265, **Version:** 1

Item #: PH-2.

PC: Tentative Parcel Map, P2017-0150-TPM, for the construction of a two-story, two-unit condominium subdivision at 9615 Lucerne Avenue in the Two-Family Residential (R2) Zone.

Meeting Date: September 27, 2017

Contact Person/Dept: Peter Sun, Assistant Planner
Michael Allen, Planning Manager

Phone Number: (310) 253-5710

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 (09/06/17);
(Email) Master Notification list (09/06/17); (Posted) City website (09/06/17); (Sign)
Posted on site (09/06/17)

Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (09/22/17)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt Class 3 and Class 15 Categorical Exemptions for this project pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act Section 15303, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures; and Section 15315, Minor Land Divisions.
2. Approve Tentative Parcel Map, P2017-0150-TPM, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2017-P017 (Attachment No. 1).
3. Make a determination to permit basements in the R2 and R3 zones, and not included in the calculation of floor area.

PROCEDURES

1. Chair calls on staff for a brief staff report and Planning Commission poses questions to staff as desired.
2. Chair opens the public hearing, providing the applicant the first opportunity to speak, followed by the general public.

3. Chair seeks a motion to close the public hearing after all testimony has been presented.
4. Commission discusses the matter and arrives at its decision.

BACKGROUND

Request

On July 18, 2017, an application was submitted for a Tentative Parcel Map to allow the subdivision of one (1) parcel into two (2) airspace condominium lots, and the construction of two (2) detached residential condominium dwelling units at 9615 Lucerne Avenue in the Two-Family Residential (R2) Zone.

This item is coming before the Planning Commission as a Tentative Parcel Map per Section 15.10.260, which requires Planning Commission approval of a tentative map or any portion thereof.

Existing Conditions

The project site is located at 9615 Lucerne Avenue on the north side of Lucerne Avenue between Lafayette Place and Irving Place. The lot is approximately 5,400 square feet, 54 feet in width and 100 feet in depth. The property is zoned Two-Family Residential (R2) and designated Low Density Two-Family in the General Plan.

The Low Density Two Family zoning designation allows one to two dwellings per lot or parcel of not less than 5,000 square feet, and up to 17.4 dwelling units per acre. The designation provides additional low-density housing opportunities and protects the low-density character of existing neighborhoods.

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

Lucerne Avenue is zoned R2 on the northwest side and Residential Medium Density (RMD) on the southeast side of the street. On the southeast side of Lucerne Avenue is a row of multi-family housing development of roughly 30 units per development. The density of houses on the northwest side of Lucerne Avenue is mixed. Lucerne Avenue connects Duquesne Avenue to Higuera Avenue.

Project Description

As outlined in the Preliminary Development Plans (Attachment No.4), the project applicant proposes to construct two (2) detached condominium dwelling units in a two-story 28'-6" high building. The two units are positioned with one in the front facing Lucerne Avenue and another in the rear with an entrance on the southwest elevation facing the alley. The two units are designed in similar style and mirror floor plans. Each of the units has a private yard and open space. Because the garages and entrances into the units can both be accessed from a public street. No common area or shared ownership of any area is required on the property. The two units are 2-story with a basement. There is a living room, dining room, and kitchen on the ground floor; 3 bedrooms on the second floor; and a den in the basement. See below for unit breakdown.

	Unit A (front)	Unit B (rear)
Bedrooms	3	3
Bathrooms	3.5	3.5
1 st Floor Living Area	701 SF	701 SF

2 nd Floor Living Area	1,122 SF	1,122 SF
Basement	701 SF	701 SF
Total Living Area	2,524 SF	2,524 SF
Open Space	1,060 SF	679 SF

ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

1. TENTATIVE PARCEL MAP

The State Subdivision Map Act and CCMC Chapter 15.10 regulate the subdivision of land, and require the submittal of a tentative tract map for subdivisions meeting certain criteria, including specific airspace subdivisions for condominium purposes. CCMC Section 17.210.020 notes condominium, townhome, or planned development projects may be subdivided with smaller parcel sizes for ownership purposes, with the minimum lot area determined through the subdivision review process, provided that the overall development site complies with the minimum lot size requirements of the Zoning Code.

The project lot area is 5,400 square feet. The lot is adequate in size to support the development of two (2) condominium airspace units and meets the requirements of the Zoning Code. Tentative Parcel Map No. 77141 has been reviewed and deemed complete by the City's Engineering Division as it includes the proper legal map descriptions, adequate preliminary site drainage and grading, and details to be accepted for tentative approval.

Standards of Development

The R2 zone allows a density of 2 units per lot, and requires minimum front yard setback of 15 feet, side yard setback of 4 feet, and rear yard setback of 10 feet. The maximum allowable height is 30 feet and two (2) stories.

The project meets all applicable development standards of the R2 zone. The project complies with all setback requirements, providing a 15-foot front yard setback, 4-foot side yard setbacks, and 10-foot rear yard setbacks. The units are proposed to be 28'-6" high to the top of the parapet and comply with the 30-foot maximum height in the R2 zone.

Basement and Floor Area Calculation

Floor area calculation is established in the Zoning Code in order to regulate development so that building size is consistent with the scale of parcel sizes by controlling bulk of building to land. In Zoning Code Section 17.210.020 Table 2-3 Residential Districts Development Standards, the floor area of basements is not included in the calculation of maximum floor area ratio (FAR) in the R1 zone¹. However, Table 2-3 stipulates that in the R2 and R3 zones, the floor area may not exceed 1,500 square feet plus 40% of net lot area for parcels less than 8,000 square feet (or 60% of lot area for parcels larger than 8,000 square feet), and does not indicate if basement floor area is to be included within this standard.

Consistent with the regulations for R-1 as it relates to basements, in the R-2 and R-3 zone, allowing the basement floor area in addition to the permitted floor area stipulated in Table 2-3, achieves more flexibility for a designer to improve the livability and marketability of a dwelling unit, without unreasonably restricting floor area limitations (regulating bulk and massing).

In the proposed project, a 701-square-foot basement is included with each proposed unit but has not been included in the calculation of floor area. The basements are proposed as a recreation room or den with a

bathroom and mechanical closet for each unit. If the 701-square-foot basement was above ground, the building would not only be perceived as a larger building, but the lot would also potentially have less open space.

Architectural Design

The two condominiums are designed in a style that is modern and minimalistic with a simple building form, cladding and other wall finishes. Each of the units is finished with smooth painted stucco in white or grey on the top or bottom floor, and Fiberon composite siding to look like Ipe wood. The doors and window frames are bronze colored to match the Ipe wood siding.

Parking

Parking is provided in at-grade double loaded garages facing the alley; each unit has its required 2 parking spaces. The garages meet the minimum dimensions required per code and provides adequate back-up for vehicle maneuverability from the alley. Moreover, there is enough space in front of the garages to fit two compact vehicles in addition to the 2 required enclosed spaces. Per a condition of approval, each garage is required to be designed to be EV ready to allow for electric vehicle charging installation.

Trash

Per the requirements of the Environmental Programs and Operations Division, each of the units is provided one recycle bin, waste bin, and organic waste bin. The bins are stored outside of the garage and will be rolled onto the street during trash pick-up days.

Landscape

As required by the CCMC, the applicant must landscape all front, side, and rear yards not devoted to paved driveways, walkways, or patios. A preliminary landscape plan was submitted as part of the entitlement plans and indicates that 2 trees will be planted per unit in the interior open space; 1 tree planted in the rear, and 4 trees planted in the front yard facing Lucerne Avenue; 2 existing street trees in the parkway will remain.

Neighborhood Compatibility

The project is designed to be compatible with the existing development pattern of the block. The property is adjacent to a mix of single-family residences and up to 4-unit properties; the majority of the properties on the block bounded by Irving Place, Lucerne Avenue, Lafayette Place, and Farragut Drive is improved with single-family residences. The block, which is zoned R2, is slightly under-developed in density. Currently, there are 33 units in the 3.3-acre block; or 10 dwelling units per acre. The Low Density Two Family General Plan designation allows up to 17.4 dwelling units per acre. The project proposes 2 units on a 5,400-square-foot lot or a density of 16 dwelling units per acre and is within range of the permitted density of the Low Density Two Family.

The project also heeds potential privacy concerns by addressing window alignment with abutting residences. There are no windows aligned on the second floor and located within a 10-foot distance. Therefore, the project has been designed to have minimal impacts to privacy.

The project is also designed to be compatible with the two properties on either side of the subject property, 4245 Irving Place and 4244 Lafayette Place, which makes the street elevation on Lucerne Avenue from Irving Place to Lafayette Place. The residence at 4245 Irving Place is a 2-story building with 3,237 square feet of floor area and lot coverage of 53%; the residence at 4244 Lafayette Place is 1-story building with 4,010 square feet of floor area and lot coverage of 52%. The proposed project has 2 units of 1,823 square feet of floor area

each and lot coverage of 42.6%; the project is designed to be comparable to the two properties that make up the street elevation.

The project scale and massing is also compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. The single-family residence abutting the project site to the north at 4245 Irving Place is a 2-story building with the second story built above the garage. Directly across Lucerne Avenue is a 3-story 30-unit apartment that has a front elevation with 3 floors that are in the same plane. The proposed units at 28'-6" in height is in scale with the surrounding neighborhood and compatible in massing.

Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA)

This project will address a portion of Culver City's share of the RHNA by constructing 1 net new market rate dwelling unit. 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 proposes to incorporate conduits capable of electric vehicle (EV) charging within the garages. Bicycle racks are also provided in front of each garage. Due to the scale of the project solar photovoltaic improvements are not 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.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The applicant held two community meetings inviting owners and occupants of properties within a 500-foot radius to review the proposed project, provide comments and feedback, as well as to share any concerns regarding the proposed project.

Community Meetings

Two properly noticed community meetings were held on June 8 and September 7, 2017. During the first community meeting, no community members showed to participate, but the applicant managed to reach a resident at 4245 Irving Place and a resident at 4241 Irving Place individually. A summary of the comments from both residents are included in the Community Meeting Summary (Attachment 6). During the second community meeting, one resident from 4244 Lafayette Place participated and indicated support for the project designs. (Attachment 7).

Comments Received During Public Comment Period

Prior to the Planning Commission hearing, the applicant was directed to contact each of the neighbors abutting the project site via mail. The applicant sent a letter via certified mail to 4240, 4234, and 4244 Lafayette Place; and 4235, and 4241 Irving Place. The resident from 4615 Lucerne Avenue submitted a letter in support of the project. (Attachment 8).

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

Based on the preliminary development plans and recommended conditions of approval, staff finds the project to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, providing a layout, architectural design, and landscape consistent with applicable development standards, with adequate public facilities, and consistent with the Culver City General Plan and the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. Additionally, the Tentative Parcel Map meets all requirements of the CCMC and the State Subdivision Map Act. Staff believes the findings for Tentative Parcel Map No. 77141, P2017-0150-TPM, can be made as outlined in Resolution No. 2017-P017 (Attachment 1).

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, initial review of the project by staff established that there are no potentially significant adverse impacts on the environment and the proposed project has been determined to be Class 3 and Class 15 Categorical Exemptions as "Construction or Conversion of Small Structures" (Section 15303) and "Minor Land Division" (Section 15315) project. Specifically, as outlined herein, the project consists of the construction of two (2) multi-story structure containing two (2) detached residential dwelling units and the subdivision of the site into two (2) airspace condominiums, thereby establishing one (1) condominium residential unit on each airspace lot. The proposed project involves the construction of a limited number of small structures, such as a duplex or similar residential structure, totaling no more than six (6) dwelling units within an urbanized area. The project is deemed to be consistent with the applicable General Plan and RMD zoning designation and regulations without any variances or exceptions, does not involve a parcel from a larger subdivision within the previous two (2) years, and will not result in a parcel with an average slope greater than 20 percent. In addition, the project will be adequately served by all required utilities and public services; and will have all serves and access to local standards. Therefore, the project is categorically exempt pursuant to the above noted CEQA sections.

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.

NOTES:

1. Basements were recently excluded from the calculation of floor area in the R-1 zone.

Section 17.220.020, Footnote No. 7 states, "Basement area shall not be included in the calculation" and similarly the Zoning Code definition also excludes basements from the calculation of floor area. However, footnote No. 7 was only placed in Section 17.220.020 Table 2-3 under the R1 zone.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Planning Commission Resolution No. 2017-P017 and Exhibit A: Conditions of Approval
2. Project Site Vicinity Map
3. Project Summary
4. Preliminary Development Plans dated August 22, 2017
5. Tentative Tract Map No. 77141
6. Community Meeting Summary
7. Community Meeting Summary 2
8. Correspondence