



City of Culver City

Mike Balkman
Council Chambers
9770 Culver Blvd.
Culver City, CA 90232
(310) 253-5851

Staff Report

File #: 20-1041, **Version:** 1

Item #: 2.

PC - Modification to a previously approved Administrative Site Plan (P2016-0121-ASPR), consisting of a four (4) unit condominium subdivision in the Medium Density Multiple-Family Residential (RMD) Zone.

Meeting Date: June 10, 2020

Contact Person/Dept: Michael Allen/Current Planning Manager
William Kavadas/Assistant Planner;

Phone Number: 310-253-5727 / 310-253-5706

Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒

General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Hearing: ☒ **Action Item:** ☐ **Attachments:** ☒

City Council Action Required: Yes ☐ No ☒ **Date:** N/A

Public Notification: (Mailed) Property Owners and Occupants 500-foot radius (05/20/2020); (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - Planning Commission (06/05/2020); (Posted) City Website (06/05/2020); Onsite Sign (05/20/2020).

Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (06/04/20)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission adopt a Class 3 Categorical Exemption, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act and Approve Administrative Site Plan Review Modification, P2020-0081-ASPR/M, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2020-P010.

PROCEDURES

1. Chair calls on staff for a brief staff report and the Planning Commission poses questions to staff as desired.
2. Chair opens the public hearing and 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 1, 2020, Paul Crane (the “Applicant”), applied for an Administrative Site Plan Review Modification to allow revisions to four (4) previously approved condominium units (the “Project”) at 4180 Duquesne Avenue (the “Project Site”) in the Medium Density Multiple Family (RMD) Zone. The Project was previously approved per Administrative Site Plan Review (P2016-0121-ASPR) and Tentative Parcel Map (P2016-0121-TPM). Proposed modifications include the following:

- Modification to approve roof top railing and increase in height by one foot five inches (1’5”)
- Modification to approve rooftop staircase windows
- Modification to approve window sizes and location along facades

There is no proposed modification to the original Tentative Parcel Map approval.

Existing Conditions

The Project Site is located on the north side of Duquesne Avenue, west of the intersection of Farragut Drive, as shown on the Vicinity Map as part of Attachment No. 4. The subject lot is 50 feet in width by 135 feet in depth, having a gross lot size of 6,750 square feet. The project site is zoned Medium Density Multiple Family Residential (RMD) and is surrounded by other RMD properties to the west, east, and south, and by Two-Family Residential (R2) properties to the north. The neighborhood is a mix of multi-family developments of varying unit counts.

The Project Site has been under development since 2017 under Building Permit #B17-0567. The project as previously approved includes four (4) condominium dwelling units in a two-story 24’-8” tall building. The four units are positioned as two units side-by-side in the front of the lot and two units side-by-side in the rear of the lot. Each of the units have common area on the ground floor and 2-3 bedrooms on the second floor. Unit breakdown is available in Table 1.

	Unit A	Unit B	Unit C	Unit D
Bedrooms	2	3	3	3
Bathrooms	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
1 st Floor Living Area	606	678	883	870
2 nd Floor Living Area	819	951	876	908
Total Living Area	1,425	1,629	1,759	1,778

The property is located in the Gateway Neighborhood and subject to Multi-Family Design Guidelines. The Project as approved was designed in a modern style with large expansive windows and a building form with both vertical and horizontal articulation, achieved through varying building planes. Private roof decks are provided for each tenant space and a ground level yard of at least 200 square feet is provided to each unit. Resident and guest parking is provided in a semi-subterranean garage accessed from Duquesne Avenue.

Project Description

The proposed modifications to originally approved project design include changes to the rooftop railing along the perimeter of the structure, windows surrounding the rooftop staircase, and window sizes and location along the facades of the structure.

Per CCMC Section 17.595.035, changes to an approved project must be considered major or minor as determined by the Community Development Director. A major modification depends on whether the proposal may result in several factors, including significant changes to the design or operation of the proposed use. The Zoning Code requires the original approving body, the Planning Commission to consider requests for major modifications. Some of the project changes were made without staff authorization. These changes include modifications to window size and window layout around the rooftop staircase enclosure.

ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION:

Architectural Design and Neighborhood Compatibility

Rooftop Railing Modification

The first modification consists in the change of material and height of the rooftop railing. The previously approved railing was three-foot six inch (3'6") in height and consisted of metal railing with narrow spacing to ensure privacy for adjacent property and to restrict views to the rooftop area.

The proposed roof top railing is five feet (5') tall consisting of 4" wide horizontal wooden slats spaced ½" apart for the first three feet and five inches (3'5") and for the remaining one foot seven inches (1'7") of railing, the wood slats are thinner at 2" wide and are spaced 3" apart to provide a more open and visible rooftop area. The railing would be setback three feet (3') from the roof edge along the perimeter of the building roof. The proposed rooftop railing would increase in height by one foot six inches (1'6") for an overall building structure height of 27 feet. However, the proposed increase in rooftop railing would create an incompatibility with Block D typologies per the Gateway Neighborhood Design Guidelines, which call for an average building height of 24 feet.

Staff believes that the screening should maintain the existing three-foot six-inch (3'6") height originally proposed to maintain consistency with average neighborhood height. In addition, Conditions of Approval should include the requirement that the railing be painted in neutral tones to match the main structure. Staff brings this forward to Planning Commission for final determination of appropriateness of the modification.

Staircase Window Modification

The second proposal includes the reduction in the amount of window coverage in the rooftop staircase enclosure. Originally, the approved project included a rooftop staircase enclosure with all windowed façade. To more easily satisfy energy standards per the Building Code, the Applicant seeks to reduce the number of windows. While windowed facades help to orient a building towards the public right-of-way, the setback of the staircase enclosures from the edge of the building and the placement on roof level reduces visibility from the public right-of-way. The applicant has currently framed the building without the window treatment.

Original project approval discussed staircase enclosures from a standpoint of their compatibility due to their eight-foot (8') height and increased setbacks from the edge of the building. As the staircase structures themselves will stay in the same location as originally approved, the proposed modification is considered consistent with Neighborhood Design Guidelines but will be inconsistent with the original project approval

Window Modification

The final proposal is the modification of window size along the building façades. As shown in the proposed architectural plans, windows along the façade of the building are proposed for reduction in size. As part of original approvals, window placement and size were discussed as a component of the project. The original staff report discussed the utilization of large expansive windows along the front of the building and the use of a window alignment study to protect privacy of adjacent neighbors.

A reduction in window sizes along side property lines is considered acceptable per the Design Guidelines that call for protection of privacy. Per the originally approved plans included as part of Attachment No. 4, windows were placed to not align with those on neighboring properties. A further reduction in overall window size along the side of the structure may help to achieve privacy for both neighboring structures while also maintaining light and airflow for the subject property. However, staff believes that the front façade and front corner windows should remain as originally approved to break up the building façade along the street edge and orient the building towards the street as called for in the Neighborhood Design Guidelines. Increased solid wall in this part of the building does not meet this goal.

As part of the Conditions of Approval, staff recommends reducing window sizes along the rear and side setback with the exception that front and front corner facades maintain window openings as previously approved. The proposed architectural modifications to the rooftop railing, staircase enclosure windows, and façade windows will not have any additional impacts on the project.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

As part of the modification review process, a public notice was sent to all property owners and occupants within a 500' foot radius of the project site and extended to end of City block. A sign was also posted in the project front yard setback facing Duquesne Avenue. No Public Comment was received from the public prior to agenda finalization.

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

The proposed modifications will not affect consistency with the General Plan. The construction of four (4) new attached residential dwellings will result in three (3) net new units at a density consistent with the General Plan's Medium Density Multiple Family Land Use designation. The Project is also consistent with the goals of the General Plan, specifically, Objective 2, which calls for the retention and creation of housing throughout the City and the encouragement of multiple-family housing opportunities within neighborhoods designated for this development type. Based on review of the Project plans, the proposed residential development is not anticipated to result in any significant impacts on surrounding uses or to be inconsistent with the goals of the General Plan. Furthermore, the addition of three (3) net units will be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Housing Element specifically, Objective 2, which calls for opportunities for developing a variety of housing types while protecting the character and stability of existing Culver City neighborhoods. There is no applicable Specific Plan for this area.

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

The proposed modifications to the previously approved Project will not significantly alter the original entitlement but they do change the building façade from the original approval. The proposed modifications will conform to all applicable Zoning Code Standards and the modifications to the façade, with the stipulation that the front of the building be maintained as previously approved, will comply with the Guidelines and Typologies

of the Gateway Neighborhood Multi-Family Design Guidelines. All findings as required per CCMC Section 17.540.020 are made in the affirmative as

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 Categorically Exempt per CEQA Section 15303, Class 3 - Construction and Conversion of Small Structures as the project consists of the construction of one multi-story structure containing four (4) attached residential dwelling units, totaling no more than six (6) dwelling units within an urbanized area. The modifications proposed will not further modify the building beyond what is exempt from CEQA.

MOTION

That the Planning Commission:

Adopt a Class 3, Categorical Exemption and Approve an Administrative Site Plan Review Modification, subject to the Conditions of Approval stated in the proposed Planning Commission Resolution

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Planning Commission Resolution No. 2020-P010, Exhibit A-Conditions of Approval
2. Site Plan Review Modification Preliminary Plans dated March 23, 2020
3. Planning Commission Staff Report with Attachments dated September 28, 2016