



City of Culver City

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

Staff Report

File #: 22-1085, **Version:** 1

Item #: 1.

PC - PUBLIC HEARING: Consideration of a Five Unit Condominium Subdivision at 3906 Huron Avenue in the Residential Medium Density (RMD) Zone (Project).

Meeting Date: June 8, 2022

Contact Person/Dept: Erika Ramirez, 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:** TBD

Public Notification: (Mailed) Property owners and occupants within a 500-foot radius of the site (05/18/2022); (Sign Posted) Project Site (05/18/2022); (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas-Planning Commission (06/01/2022); (Posted) City Website (05/19/2022)

Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (05/28/2022)

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Planning Commission 1) Adopt Class 3 Categorical Exemption pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act; 2) Approve Administrative Site Plan Review P2021-0316-ASPR and recommend to the City Council approval of a Tentative Tract Map, P2021-0316-TTM, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2022-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 December 13, 2021, Dan Azran - Refined Home Construction (the "Applicant") applied for an Administrative Site Plan Review and Tentative Tract Map to allow the development of five attached condominium units (the "Project") at 3906 Huron Avenue (the "Project Site") in the Medium Density Multiple Family (RMD) Zone.

Existing Conditions

The Project Site is located on the southeast corner of Huron Avenue and Matteson Avenue, as shown on the Vicinity Map (Attachment No. 2). The subject lot is 50 feet in width by 150 feet in depth, the same size as other lots in the vicinity of the Project Site. The Project Site is currently vacant but was most recently developed with two single family homes.

Surrounding Area/General Plan/Zoning

The surrounding neighborhood includes multi-family dwellings with a small collection of single-family, duplex, and triplex buildings. The neighborhood is a mix of single and multi-story structures. The City's General Plan Land Use Element designates the site as Medium Density Multiple Family and the site is zoned Medium Density Multiple-Family Residential (RMD). Surrounding zoning and land use is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Surrounding Zoning and Land Use

Location	Zoning	Land Use
West	RMD	Single Family Home
East	RMD	Duplex
North	RMD	Six Unit Apartment
South	RMD	Duplex

Project Description

The proposed structure has a contemporary design for five attached condominium units. The dwelling units are two-stories including a mezzanine located over a subterranean garage. The units have a maximum height of 30 feet to the roofline and 33 feet 6 inches to the top of the parapet wall. Each unit has two parking spaces in a shared subterranean parking garage. Pedestrian access to the subterranean garage would be provided by a common access staircase and lift at Matteson Avenue. A driveway provides vehicular access to the subterranean garage from Huron Avenue. Resident entrances are primarily accessed from Matteson Avenue. The project development program is summarized in Table 2:

Table 2: Development Program

	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5
Size (sq. ft.)	1,857	1,818	2,114	2,187	2,147
Bedrooms	3	3	3	3	3
Bath	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5

ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION:

The RMD Zone allows for up to one dwelling unit per 1,500 square feet of net lot area, up to a maximum of nine dwelling units. Based on the 7,500 square foot lot area, a maximum of five dwelling units are permitted on-site; the applicant is proposing five units. As illustrated in the Project Summary (Attachment No. 3), the proposed development conforms to all regulations of the RMD Zone.

ADMINISTRATIVE SITE PLAN REVIEW

Architectural Design

The structure has a modern design with straight lines and multiple surfaces treatments that help to reduce and vary massing along all sides of the building. Along Matteson and Huron Avenues, the applicant has provided cut-ins to the building that help to give each unit the character of a stand-alone unit. This is seen towards the top of the structure along Matteson where second floor balconies create cut-ins along the street frontage and above the driveway on the Huron frontage where a building in-set and balcony reduce the corner massing of the structure. Large windows at street level also help to create an active façade that opens itself up to the street while planters help to maintain privacy for the homeowners while greening the public right-of-way. The applicant introduces variation along the rear interior side yard façade. Several building cut-ins and changes in material reduce the sense of bulk and mass along the side while also reducing monotony in building design. Windowed facades also break of the façade while protecting privacy of project residents and neighbors by offsetting windows from either property. The articulated surfaces in the project include a mix of light-colored wood siding and textured concrete with grey and white smooth stuccos. Roof top decks are bounded by solid parapet but include a glass parapet walls at the building edge along street frontage to reduce the perception of building height along the street frontage. Roof decks are also setback five feet from building edge along interior side and rear property lines to increase privacy for project residents and neighbors. Roof decks are accessed from stairwells that are setback eight feet from building edge to reduce visibility from the public right-of-way. Rooftop area has also been set aside for future solar panels installation.

Landscaping

As required by the Zoning Code, the applicant must landscape all front, side, and rear yards that are not devoted to paved driveways, walkways, or patios. In addition, the front setback area must include a total landscaping equal to 55 percent the overall area. The Project conditions of approval will include requirements for drought tolerant and water efficient planting.

Landscaping will include a variety of materials including trees and shrub and ground cover planting to soften the building façade and increase privacy along property lines. The landscape plan incorporates Sweet Bay trees along the rear yard to increase privacy while a 36" box Australian Willow will be planted in the front yard. The street-side side yard has also been softened by planters adjacent to the primary doorways. Trees, shrubs, and ground cover will be required ed to be drought tolerant planting. The Project is subject to the City's Urban Forest Master Plan and will provide parkway landscape improvements including one new street tree. Preliminary landscape information is included in the preliminary development plans (Attachment No. 4).

Open Space

The RMD Zone requires a minimum 100 square feet of open space per unit. Each unit provides more than the

minimum open space requirement by way of roof decks. The proposed roof decks for the project and ground level yards for Units 1 and 5 provide a total open space area of 2,406 total square feet for the Project. Private open space details are shown in Table 3. Roof decks will each include a barbeque and spa. Area set aside for future solar panel installation will not reduce useable open space below the 100 square feet minimum.

Table 3: Private Open Space per Unit

	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Total
Roof Top Private Deck (sq. ft.)	538	499	499	462	408	2,406

Neighborhood Compatibility and Multi-Family Guidelines

The proposed development is located along the 3900 block of Huron Avenue surrounded by mostly multi-family uses of one to two stories. The block and surrounding Clarkdale neighborhood have overall transitioned to higher density housing developments consistent with the Medium Density Multiple Family land use designation envisioned for the neighborhood by the City's General Plan Land Use Element. As part of the development review, the applicant provided a neighborhood typology study to understand the built environment of Huron Avenue between Matteson Avenue to the north and Washington Boulevard to the south. Neighborhood typologies are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Neighborhood Typologies

	Coverage	Height	Setback
Clarkdale	42%	16'-1"	17'-4 ½"
3906 Huron	67%	30'-0"	15'-0"

Typologies are intended as a baseline to ensure new structures are compatible with the neighborhood block and adjacent parcels. The overall 30-foot height to the roof deck, 33-foot, 6-inch height to top of parapet wall, and 38-foot, 10-inch height to top of stairwell is taller than the Clarkdale block average of 16 feet in height, but within zoning code height limits. The applicant revised the proposed project plans by adding articulation to the building faces along Clarkdale and setback the roof stairwells to the center of the building. Building articulation was also used to reduce massing along the Huron Avenue front setback, which proposes a 15 feet setback.

Overall, the project complies with the Multi-Family Design Guidelines. Massing is reduced along street frontages by utilizing a mix of façade treatments and articulation. Parking is subterranean with no visibility from side or rear yards and setback areas are landscaped. Front entrances for each unit face the public right-of-way, and project windows do not align with neighboring property windows as much as possible. Privacy for both future residents and adjacent residents is further maintained on the roof top decks by use of setbacks from roof edges.

Traffic, Parking, Storage, Circulation

The project provides 12 parking spaces as required by the Zoning Code, distributed as shown below:

- Ten subterranean parking stalls
 - Two per unit
- Two guest parking spaces
 - One accessible stall
 - One standard stall with EV charging station

The subterranean garage is accessed from a single driveway from Huron Avenue. The driveway slope is at a

five percent slope for the first 20 feet instead of code required three percent. However, the applicant provides supporting drawings with engineer approval to ensure visibility of pedestrians at the public right-of-way and ability for automobiles to traverse changes in slope without damaging the underside of the vehicle. Resident parking is provided in tandem stalls assigned to each unit and meeting minimum width, length, and overhead clearance requirements in compliance with Zoning Code requirements. Additional clearance is provided in the garage for 102 cubic feet of lockable private storage. A 25-foot, 9 ½ inch back-up drive aisle provides enough turning radius and circulation area to maneuver in and out of parking stalls and exit the site with automobiles facing the public right-of-way. Primary pedestrian access to each unit is provided via front doors facing the public right-of-way. Exterior access to the garage will be provided by a lift and common staircase along Matteson Avenue. Two bike parking stalls are provided per unit in the subterranean garage and two guest bike stalls are provided along the Matteson Avenue frontage of the project adjacent to the pedestrian garage entry.

The site exceeds code standard for electric vehicle (EV) parking. Code requires a minimum of two EV ready parking spaces, two EV capable parking spaces, and one full EV charging station. The applicant has provided one EV ready space while increasing the number of EV charging stations to two EV Charging Stations and has provided two EV capable spaces.

The proposed means of vehicle and pedestrian ingress/egress to and from the site provides adequate access for emergency vehicles and services. The configuration of the proposed onsite vehicle maneuvering area is designed in accordance with all applicable CCMC standards and the driveway design allows for visibility and maneuverability of automobiles. The density of the development will not create significant traffic impacts on adjacent streets and is below the threshold required for traffic study as determined by the Public Works Mobility Division.

TENTATIVE TRACT MAP

The State Subdivision Map Act and CCMC Chapter 15.10 regulate land division and require the submittal of a tentative tract map for subdivision of five airspace condominium parcels. In addition, CCMC Section 17.210.020 - Table 2-4, Residential District Development Standards (RLD, RMD, and RHD), require 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. As a one-lot subdivision for condominium purposes, the Project lot area will remain at 7,500 square feet. The lot width of 50 feet and lot width of 150 feet will remain. The project lot configuration - area, width, and length - complies with RMD development standards. Through the subdivision process, five condominium air spaces will be created within the existing conforming lot.

The key objective of the tentative tract map process is to allow the City to review the proposed subdivision to ensure all necessary improvements and requirements are provided. The City has reviewed the Tentative Tract Map (Attachment No. 5) for the proposed subdivision and determined compliance with all applicable State and local regulations as more specifically outlined in the recommended conditions of approval. In condominium or townhome developments, the driveway and the land surrounding the units are held in common and vehicular access easements will be secured through the condominium association's Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs).

PUBLIC OUTREACH:

Pursuant to the City's Community Meeting Guidelines, two virtual community meetings were held on June 3,

2021 and on November 18, 2021. The applicant invited interested persons to learn about the proposal, provide comments and feedback, and share any concerns. Approximately seven people who live in the project neighborhood attended the first community meeting and approximately four people who live in the project neighborhood attended the second community meeting. Below is a summary of each meeting:

1st Community Meeting June 3, 2021

- Concern about the height of the building
- Appreciation for the design quality
- General questions about construction timeframes, landscaping provisions

2nd Community Meeting November 18, 2021

- Concern about the height of the building
- Concern about making sure street trees comply with Code
- Concerns that the modern look did not fit in with the neighborhood
- Concern about parking availability

The original design presented at the first community meeting was revised to provide more articulation to the building. Interior side yard façade was modified to provide more vertical separations as opposed to just horizontal separations while reductions in roof deck area in the front of the project helped to introduce additional stepbacks on the upper floor. The design of the building with stepbacks on upper floors aimed at reducing the perception of height. The additional guest parking space for accessible parking is one more total parking space than required by the Zoning Code. The architects proposed a modern architectural design, outside of what is existing in the neighborhood as a way to add variation to the neighborhood while contributing to a pedestrian-oriented frontage. A summary from the second Community Meeting is included as Attachment No. 6. Staff requests the Planning Commission advise if the proposed Project height is acceptable.

Comments Received During Public Comment Period

The item was noticed by mail to owners and occupants in a 500-foot radius extended to City block and by two on-site signs. As of the writing of this report, staff has not received any written public comments on the proposed project.

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY:

The proposed development will result in code compliant structures and parking and provide additional housing in the City. The applicant has redesigned and modified the project to address neighborhood concerns and meet both the specific Zoning Code requirements

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, New Construction of Small Structures for 6 or fewer units in an urbanized area.

The proposed Project is not subject to any of the exceptions for exemption under Section 15300.2 of the CEQA Guidelines. The location of the project is predominantly urban and not considered a sensitive environment; therefore, the project will not result in any significant impacts that may otherwise occur in a sensitive environmental area. The cumulative impact of this Project, and the approval of other projects like it in the vicinity, is not expected to have any significant environmental impact that has not already been studied by virtue of adopting the original zoning for the property and surrounding neighborhood. Additional residential developments constructed within the regulations of the adopted zoning code are not expected to have cumulative or significant environmental impacts that have not already been studied as part of original code adoption. The project is not located along any state designated scenic highway or within any designated hazardous waste site. The site on which the Project is proposed is not considered a significant historical site by any governmental body. Staff does not expect any significant impacts or unusual circumstances related to the approval and construction of the Project.

MOTION:

That the Planning Commission:

- 1) Adopt of a Class 3, Categorical Exemption and Approve an Administrative Site Plan Review P2021-0316-ASPR, subject to the Conditions of Approval stated in the proposed Planning Commission Resolution; and
- 2) Recommend to the City Council approval of the Tentative Tract Map No. 083810, P2021-0316-TTM, subject to the Conditions of Approval stated in proposed Planning Commission Resolution.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed Planning Resolution No. 2022-P010 and Exhibit A-Conditions of Approval and Exhibit B-Standard Code Requirements
2. Vicinity Map
3. Project Summary
4. Preliminary Development Plans Dated 5/19/2022
5. Tentative Tract Map No. 083810
6. Applicant Summary of Community Meeting