

# Agenda Report

June 23, 2014

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Planning & Community Development Department

**SUBJECT: PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW OF PROJECT LOCATED AT 260 NORTH LOS ROBLES AVENUE**

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

This report is intended to provide information to the City Council, no action is required.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

This is a predevelopment plan review for a proposed 432 unit housing project at 260 North Los Robles Avenue. The project is on property formerly owned by Fuller Seminary. Under a separate application Fuller Seminary is requesting an amendment to remove this property from the boundaries of the Fuller Seminary Master Plan.

The project proposes to provide 47 units of affordable housing and use the density bonus provisions of the Zoning Code. The project would require approval of a conditional use permit to allow an approximate 50% density bonus increase in the number of units otherwise allowed on the site. The establishment of the project would also require approval of affordable housing waivers and concessions for additional height and floor area above what the Zoning Code allows. These 47 units of affordable housing would be deed restricted to remain affordable for at least thirty years.

The proposed additional height and floor area create a project that is larger than the development on adjacent lots and several issues have been raised by City staff about the project. Staff will continue to work with the applicant team to address these issues as the project moves through the process.

## **BACKGROUND:**

Carmel Partners has submitted a Predevelopment Plan Review (PPR) application to develop the site at 260 North Los Robles Avenue. The project includes the demolition of 172 apartment units located in six buildings and the construction of 432 market-rate apartment units located within one new building. The project site is 145,499 square feet

and fronts on Los Robles Avenue, Corson Street and Oakland Avenue. The project also proposes 47 very-low income affordable units on a separate site to be determined.

The project site was formerly owned by Fuller Seminary and is part of the Fuller Seminary Master Plan and Development Agreement. A separate application has been received to amend the Fuller Seminary Master Plan to remove this property from the Master Plan boundaries. This Master Plan and Development Agreement amendment will require City Council approval.

The PPR process is established in Section 17.60.040.C of the City's Zoning Code as a process by which better projects can be achieved through early consultation between City staff and applicants. The process coordinates the review of projects among City staff, familiarizes applicants with the regulations and procedures that apply to the project, and avoids significant investment in the design of a project without preliminary input from City staff. It also helps to identify issues that may arise during application processing such as community concerns and achieving consistency with City regulations and policies.

Projects that meet the threshold of "community-wide significance" (greater than 50,000 square feet in size with at least one discretionary action, 50 or more housing units, or any project that is deemed by the Director of Planning & Community Development Department to be of major importance to the City) are presented to the City Council as a way to inform the Council and the public of significant projects. This project meets this threshold because it is over 50 units and will require more than one discretionary action.

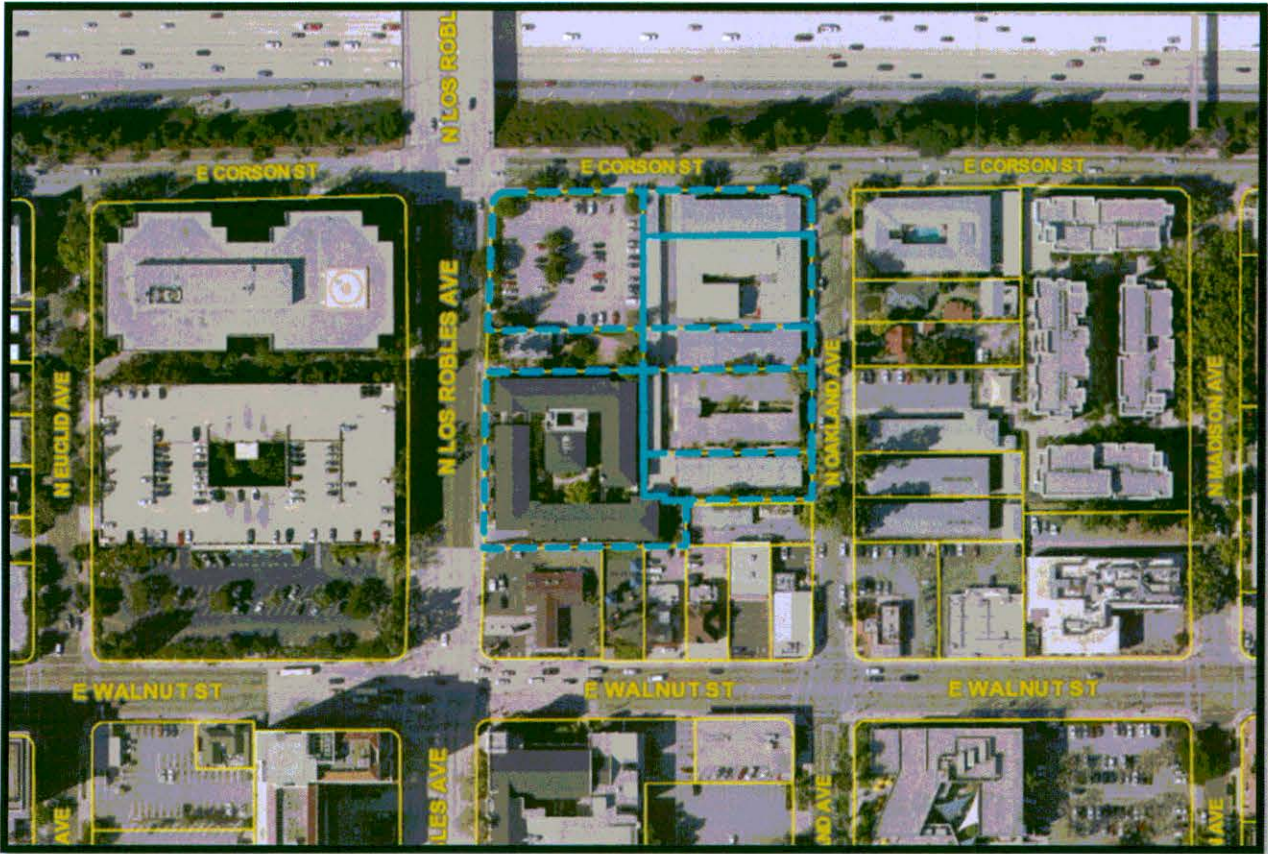
This report provides a project description, identifies the entitlement and environmental review processes, and some topic areas that staff will focus on during the processing of the project.

## **PROJECT SUMMARY:**

### **Project Site:**

The project site is bounded by Los Robles Avenue on the west, Corson Street on the north and Oakland Avenue on the east. It is comprised of eight existing parcels comprising 145,334 square feet or 3.34 acres. There are six existing residential buildings on the project site which contain 172 multi-family housing units in approximately 166,000 square feet which are all proposed for demolition.

An existing single family residence at 272 North Los Robles is not a part of the project. Concept Design approval was granted on May 27 for an 18-unit multi-family residential project on this adjacent property.



## PROJECT SITE

There are 89 existing trees on the project site. Of the 89 trees, four are indicated as meeting or exceeding the minimum threshold size to qualify for protection. In addition, two Redwood trees, while not at the 25-inch size threshold for protection, are each 20 inches in diameter and therefore exceed the 19-inch mature tree threshold. Although not specifically stated in the application, it is expected that all trees would be removed.

The project site is not within a historic or landmark district and none of the buildings proposed to be demolished are historic. The site is within the CD-3 Zoning District (Central District Specific Plan, Walnut Housing Subdistrict.) The site allows residential development up to 87 dwelling units per acre and a floor area ratio (FAR) of 2.25.

The proposed project is surrounded by commercial, office, institutional and residential land uses within buildings ranging from one to twelve stories in height. Adjacent to the west across N. Los Robles Avenue and occupying the entire block between East Walnut Street and East Corson Street, is a six-story office building, six-story above-ground parking structure and surface parking area for Kaiser Permanente. Adjacent to the south is a one-story automobile service station, a three-story church with taller steeple and a twelve-story hotel. Adjacent to the east are one-to-two-story multi-family residential buildings. Adjacent to the north are East Corson Street and the 210 Freeway.

**Project Information:**

The project consists of the new construction of a five-to-seven-story, 432-unit multi-family residential project with subterranean parking for 736 cars. The proposed floor area ratio is 3.03 and residential density is 129.3 dwelling units per acre. The project proposes to construct 47 units of affordable housing for very-low income families on an adjacent site and would apply for a 49 percent affordable housing density bonus and waivers and concessions for height and floor area ratio. The affordable units would have a deed restriction to remain affordable for a minimum of thirty years.

The current site plan and elevation for the proposed project are shown on pages 6 and 7. The complete plans are included as Attachment A.

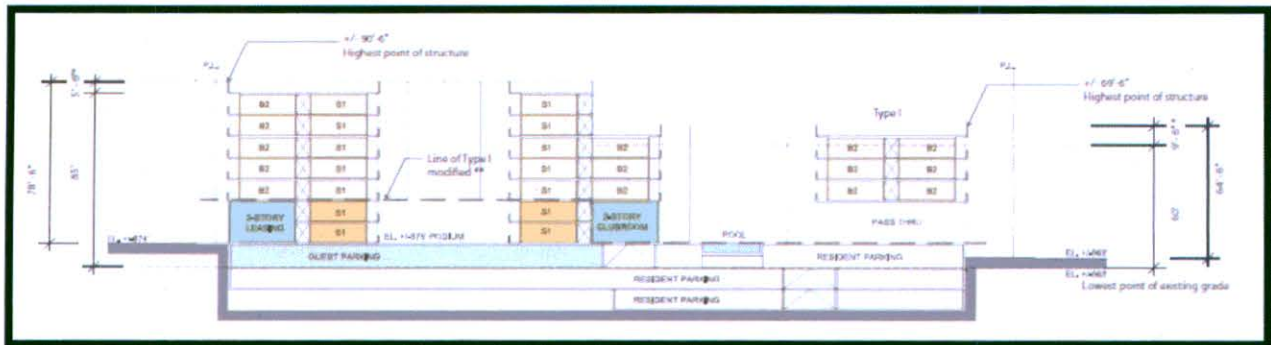


### Project Statistics:

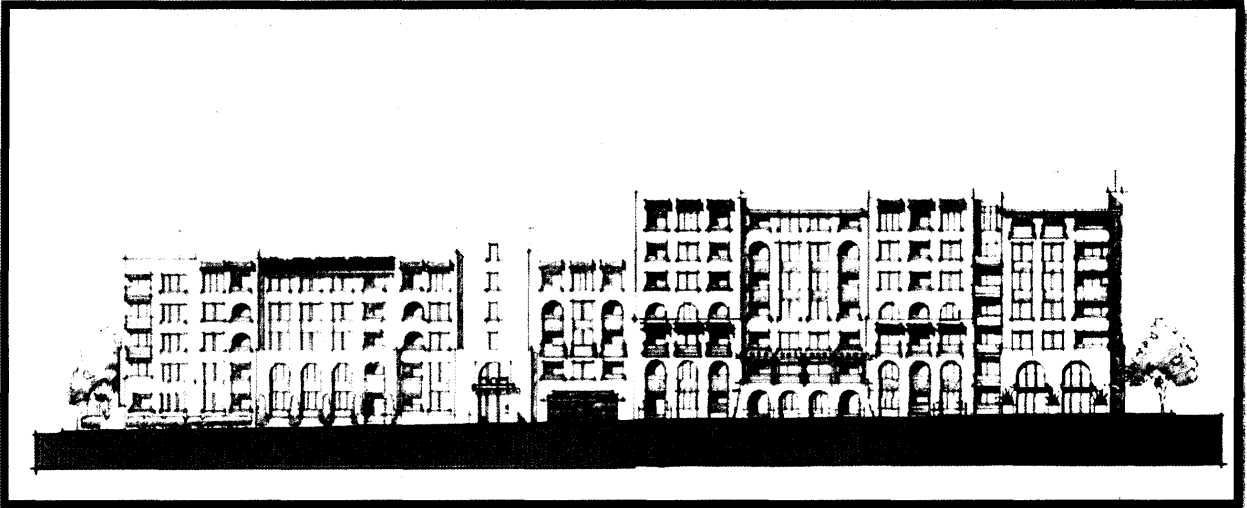
<b>Zoning Designation:</b>		
Central District Specific Plan, Walnut Housing sub-area (CD-3)		
<b>General Plan Designation:</b>		
Central District Specific Plan		
<b>Lot Size:</b>		
145,334 square feet (or 3.34 acres)		
<b>Proposed Building Size:</b>		
440,878 square feet		
<b>Floor Area Ratio (per Figure 3-9 – Central District Maximum Floor Area Ratio):</b>		
Maximum Permitted	Proposed	
2.25 or 327,002 square feet	3.03 or 440,878 square feet	
<b>Residential Density (per Figure 3-6 – Central District Maximum Residential Density):</b>		
Maximum Allowed	Maximum Allowed with 50% Density Bonus	Proposed
87 dwelling units/acre or 290 units	435 units (130 du/acre)	432 units (129 du/acre)
<b>Parking Requirement :</b>		
Required	Proposed	
650 sq. ft. or smaller unit = 1 to 1.25 spaces	119 units smaller than 650 sq. ft. = 119 - 149 spaces (based on Sheet A-1.0)	
650 sq. ft. or greater unit = 1.5 to 1.75 spaces	313 units greater than 650 sq. ft. = 470 to 548 spaces	
Guest parking = 1 for every 10 units	44 spaces	
Total Required: 589 to 697 spaces	Total Proposed: 736 spaces	
<b>Building Height (per Figure 3-8 – Central District Maximum Height):</b>		
Maximum Permitted	Proposed	
60' or 75' when utilizing height averaging	90'6"	
<b>Setbacks (per Figure 3-7 – Central District Required Setbacks and Section 17.50.350):</b>		
Required	Proposed	
Along Oakland Ave: minimum 20 feet required	20 feet	
Along Los Robles Ave: minimum 5 feet required, maximum 10 feet	5 feet	
Along Corson St: minimum 10 feet required	10 feet	
Interior Side: min 10 feet required	10 feet	
Rear: min 10 feet required	10 feet	



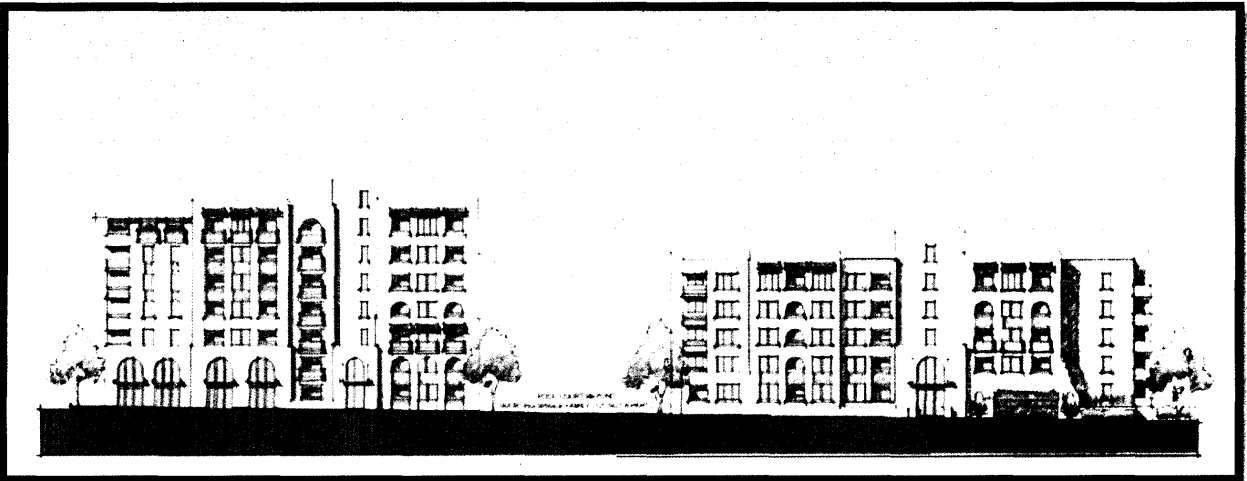
SITE PLAN



SECTION



**NORTH (CORSON STREET) ELEVATION**



**WEST (LOS ROBLES AVENUE) ELEVATION**

**Project Approvals:**

Based on the information submitted the proposed project would require the following discretionary entitlements and approvals:

- Completion of the Initial Environmental Study process and potential Environmental Impact Report;
- Affordable Housing Concession Permit;
- Waiver of Development Standards Permit;
- Conditional Use Permit to allow a affordable housing density bonus of 50%;
- Private Tree Removal Permit;
- Preliminary Consultation with the Design Commission (held on April 22, 2014);
- Concept, 50% and Final Design Review.

## **PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW SUMMARY:**

On April 2, 2014 a meeting was held to discuss the PPR comments with the applicant team and staff from City departments/divisions, including Community Planning, Current Planning, Design & Historic Preservation, Fire Department, Public Works Department, and Department of Transportation. The applicant team asked a number of specific questions to clarify some of the PPR comments, as well as the processes for entitlements and building permits. The complete comments are in Attachment B.

### **Summary of Comments**

#### **Community Planning Section:**

- The project is within the remaining housing unit allocation available in the 2004 General Plan.
- The Draft Land Use Diagram, conceptually adopted by the City Council in 2013 designates this site as Institutional because it is within the boundaries of the Fuller Seminary Master Plan. The Draft Land Use Diagram would need to be changed to show the site as "Medium Mixed Use (FAR 0 – 2.25 FAR) when the Fuller Master Plan is amended.
- The project is supportive of General Plan policies that target dense development into the Central District and near transit.
- The project supports the General Plan policies of increasing the housing supply and providing very low income housing, however it also removes 172 units of housing, which may be affordable.
- The project does not further the Housing Element goals of providing family housing or housing for college students.
- The project is supportive of the Central District Specific Plan objective of building housing downtown.
- The project's proposed height, floor area ratio, and residential density exceed the Central District Specific Plan.
- The Fuller Seminary Master Plan calls for this area to be developed with 392 units of student housing and a community green space. The Master Plan will need to be amended to remove these properties prior to any development on the site.
- The site is under the jurisdiction of a Development Agreement between Fuller Seminary and the City of Pasadena. This development agreement will need to be amended prior to any development on this site.

#### **Design and Historic Preservation Section:**

- The City conducted a historic resources survey of the Central District Specific Plan area in 2004 and did not identify any of the existing buildings on the project site as eligible historic resources. Staff has reviewed the buildings in response to this application and agrees that none appear to be eligible for historic designation.



- Because the project consists of new construction of a multi-family project with more than 10 units in the Central District, design review is required, with the Design Commission being the reviewing authority.
- Many concerns about the project have been raised by both Design and Historic Preservation Section staff and the Design Commission in the Preliminary Consultation that was held on April 22, 2014.
- Staff Comments
  - Further study modulation and softening of building edges where they approach lower-scaled existing buildings. In particular, the seven-story portion immediately north of the property at 270 N. Los Robles Avenue should be reduced to five stories to respond to maximum allowable height of new development at that location.
  - The architectural logic of the building is unclear. The building elevations suggest that the building has an articulated massing; however, the facade does not appear modulated in plan. The design guidelines recommend mitigating massing and bulk of buildings in several ways including creating emphasis at street corners, varying masses, creating deep openings, introducing articulated sub-volumes, varying vertical character, incorporating balconies and bays, recessing windows and emphasizing the horizontal dimension. Explore ways to break down the mass of the building using some of these techniques.
  - Explore ways to create view corridors from the street to the interior courtyard spaces, which should be open to the sky.
  - The units that have direct entrances to the street should be slightly set back from the street and slightly elevated above street grade to create a separate, secure entrance porch or stoop at the street edge. This treatment should also be carried to ground-level units facing courtyards.
  - The project should endeavor to create a site-specific design that responds to the architectural legacy of the City. The architectural style that the building is drawing from is unclear and does not appear to respond to Pasadena's unique character. Images of existing buildings in Pasadena from which this design is drawn should be provided to explain how the building relates to its surrounding context and the City. As part of this study, explore ways to create a more site-specific design.
  - The elevation drawings depict some new landscaping along the street edge, which should be further defined as the project moves forward in the design review process.
  - Because protected trees are proposed to be removed by the project, consideration should be given to siting open space areas in conjunction with the location of these existing trees and maintaining tree wells to preserve the trees in place (particularly non-palm trees). Protected palm trees should be considered for on-site relocation. If it is not possible to site open space areas at locations of protected trees, required replacement trees should be planted in tree wells with natural ground extending through the parking structure.

- The design guidelines encourage the use of high-quality, durable materials that express permanence. As the design is refined, explore ways to incorporate a wider variety of high quality materials, particularly at the ground level, and in conjunction with recommended studies of appropriate architectural style and massing.
- On the north elevation, one portion of the building has a sloping roof, apparently clad in barrel tiles, while the rest of the building has a parapet roof. As previously stated, the design should reflect a clear architectural logic and include references to ensure that the building relates to the surrounding context and the City. Review roof materials and forms to ensure that the logic of their placement is evident in the design on all sides of the building.
- The project should comply with the established height limit for the area, utilizing height averaging to create a modulated roofline.
- Design Commission Comments
  - Provide shade/shadow studies to ensure the courtyards have sufficient natural light.
  - Review Section A, Sheet II – garage daylighting and would allow for stoops on Corson and Oakland in conjunction with the slightly elevated podium.
  - Study closely how the building engages the ground plane – Section A3.1 – southern portion of the west elevation with blank wall condition of the building as it engages the sidewalk should be studied closely.
  - The Specific Plan discourages large monolithic vertical extrusions of the maximum allowed building footprint. The building should respond to this guideline by modulating the exterior walls and roof to break down the mass and scale. Echoing the massing of the large commercial building across the street may not be appropriate.
  - The Commission discourages the use of extremely long double-loaded corridors (especially at the eastern edge of the project) and suggests that this is not the way in which people should occupy a structure. The building needs to be further broken down and more of a human scale introduced for this very large structure, including gestures to push the massing down strategically with greater variation in response to a further resolution of the building typology.
  - Introduce the idea of a “village” and create a sense of place for the courtyards in addition to the urban edges.
  - Consider larger units for young families with appropriate outdoor space.
  - Creating a gateway with a taller massing at the northwest corner is encouraged and appears merited.
  - Review the design for the townhomes for the Westgate project along DeLacey Street for a unit type that may be appropriate for this project.

Current Planning Section:

- The maximum allowable residential density on this site is 87 units per acre. For this 145,334 square foot site this results in a maximum of 290 units. As proposed the project would contain 432 dwelling units, an increase of 49 percent or a maximum of 129 units per acre. A Conditional Use Permit is required for any density bonus exceeding 35 percent.
- The maximum FAR (Floor Area Ratio) for this site is 2.25, or 2.25 multiplied by the size of the project site. Based on a site area of 145,334 square feet, the maximum allowable building size is 327,002 square feet. As noted on the application the proposed project is 440,878 square feet in size, which equates to a FAR of 3.03.
- It is recommended that a Parcel Map be processed to consolidate all of the properties into a single-property. This would be processed in conjunction with the Conditional Use Permit.
- The maximum allowable building height for this site is 60 feet. On the plans the highest point on the building, 90'-6" feet, exceeds the 60-foot maximum height and the 75-foot maximum under height averaging. However, as indicated on the plans the applicant intends to seek a waiver from the maximum height, "...to accommodate density bonus units."
- The Zoning Code details the allowable density bonuses for multi-family projects and the residential component of mixed-use projects, as well as the processes for concessions, incentives, and waivers from applicable development standards. The Zoning Code further describes the procedure for requesting from one to three concessions as a function of the percentage of affordable units and their level of affordability:

Number of Concessions	Very Low Affordability	Low Affordability	Moderate (sale) Affordability
One	5%	10%	10%
Two	10%	20%	20%
Three	15%	30%	30%

- Concessions are processed through an Affordable Housing Concession Permit, whose process is the same as a Minor Variance and is heard by a Hearing Officer. One component of the application submittal is detailed financial information concerning the project to justify the need for the concession(s) in providing affordable housing. The City will hire, at the applicant's expense, an economic consultant to review and comment on the applicant's financial information.
- The submitted plans note that waivers are being requested in order to exceed the maximum allowable FAR of 2.25 to as much as a FAR of 3.03 and to exceed the maximum allowable height of 60 feet, or 75 feet with height averaging, with a building as tall as 90'-6". At this time it is unclear if the

project would qualify for these two concessions based on the percentage of affordable units in the project and their level of affordability.

- Environmental Review: At this time it is expected that that project will not be exempt from environmental review per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and an Initial Environmental Study will be required. Depending on the conclusions of the Initial Environmental Study the project may result in impacts that can be mitigated, or if not, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) would be required.

#### Housing Department:

- To achieve the proposed project density of 432 total units, the applicant would need to request a 49% density bonus. To qualify for a 49% density bonus, the project would have to provide either 17% of base density as affordable Very Low Income units, or 30% of base density units as affordable Low Income units. This equates to 49 Very Low Income units (17% x 290) or 87 Low Income units (30% x 290). Affordable units that are required in connection with a density bonus must be located within the proposed project.
- The project is also subject to the City's Inclusionary Housing Requirements pursuant to which ten percent (10%) of base density are to be restricted at the Low Income level, and five percent (5%) of the base density at the Moderate Income level.
- The proposed development contemplates the demolition of 172 apartment units currently located on the project site. To the extent that this results in the displacement of households, the project may be subject to the City's Tenant Protections Ordinance and the applicant may be obligated to pay relocation benefits and moving expense allowances.

#### Department of Public Works:

- In order to accommodate an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant curb ramps, the applicant shall dedicate to the City the land necessary to provide a 30-foot radius property line corner rounding at the southeast corner of Los Robles Avenue and Corson Street and at the southwest corner of Oakland Avenue and Corson Street. As an alternative to corner rounding, the applicant can propose an alternate design that complies with the ADA requirements to Public Works for their approval.
- Oakland Avenue along the frontage of the subject property has a substandard parkway width of 8 feet. In order to provide for a standard 10 feet wide parkway, the applicant shall dedicate to the City a 2-foot strip of land along the subject frontage for street purposes. The applicant shall be responsible for all the costs required to complete the dedication.
- The applicant shall construct public improvements along the frontages of the subject property in accordance with Central District Specific Plan. The improvements include installing street furnishings, such as street lights, trash receptacles and tree grates, planting street trees, landscaping, and other necessary related work.
- The applicant shall plant and maintain, for a period of three years, a maximum of one (1) Ornamental pear (*Pyrus calleryana*) tree on the Los Robles Avenue frontage



and a maximum of two (2) Brisbane box (*Tristania conferta*) trees on the Oakland Avenue frontage, per the City approved master street tree plan, and install and maintain an irrigation system for the trees.

Department of Transportation:

- Based on the preliminary information provided in the Master Application form, and based on the thresholds outlined in the Traffic Impact Review Guidelines, a full Traffic Impact Analysis is required for this project.
- No overnight parking permits will be issued to future residents of this project. The development shall be responsible for advising future tenants of the unavailability of on-street overnight parking permits.

**NEXT STEPS/PROCESS:**

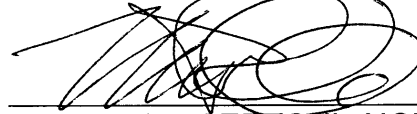
Preliminary Consultation with the Design Commission was held on April 22, 2014. The next step would be for the project to apply for any required Conditional Use Permits, Minor Conditional Use Permits, Variances, Affordable Housing Concession Permits, and Waivers of Development Standards. An Initial Environmental Study will be required as part of these discretionary reviews. Depending on the conclusions of the Initial Environmental Study the project may require an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). A traffic study will be required as part of the environmental review and additional environmental studies (e.g. air quality) may also be required.

The Design Review process (Concept, 50% and Final) will begin following the approval of the above discretionary approval process.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

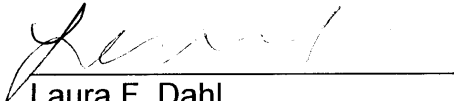
This report is for information only and will not result in any fiscal impact.

Respectfully submitted,



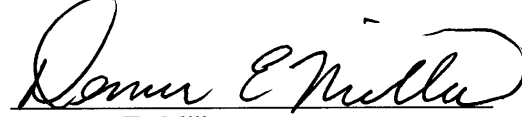
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Attachments:

Attachment A - Current Submittal Plans

Attachment B - PPR staff comments