

Agenda Report

July 20, 2020

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Planning & Community Development Department

SUBJECT: PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW OF A NEW PLANNED DEVELOPMENT PROPOSING A MIXED-USE PROJECT WITH 227 UNITS OF HOUSING AND 4,500 SQUARE FEET OF GROUND FLOOR COMMERCIAL SPACE AT 452 NORTH LOS ROBLES AVENUE

RECOMMENDATION:

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

BACKGROUND:

The applicant, Summerhill Apartment Community Investments, LLC, has submitted a Predevelopment Plan Review (PPR) application to redevelop the property at 452 North Los Robles Avenue (AIN 5731-021-042, 5731-021-034) with a mixed-use project totaling 255,946 square feet in four to five stories, with 227 units of housing and 4,496 square feet of ground floor commercial use above two levels of subterranean parking with 365 spaces. The site consists of two parcels with area totaling 113,727 square feet (2.6 acres) after dedications, and is located at the corner of N. Los Robles Avenue and E. Villa Street. The site is zoned CL (Limited Commercial), and is currently developed with a 99 Cent Store retail building, a dental office, and a surface parking lot, all of which would be demolished to accommodate the project. To facilitate the development project, the applicant is proposing to rezone the project site to a Planned Development (PD) zoning district.

Pursuant to Zoning Code Section 17.60.040.C.2.a.(4) (Application Preparation and Filing – Predevelopment Plan Review – Applicability – Mandatory review) a PPR is required for multi-family projects consisting of ten or more dwelling units. The purpose of the PPR is to achieve better projects through early consultation between City staff and applicants. The intent is to coordinate the review of projects among City staff and City departments, familiarize applicants with regulations and procedures that apply to the project, and avoid significant investment in the design of a project without preliminary input from City staff. In addition, the purpose is to identify issues that may arise during review of the project, provide opportunities for discussion about the project and an exchange of information on potential issues between the City staff and

applicants, and inform the City Council and the public of proposed development projects defined in the administrative guidelines to be of communitywide significance.

A project is categorized as a project of communitywide significance if it consists of: 1) more than 50,000 square feet of gross floor area with one discretionary action; or 2) 50 or more housing units; or 3) any project determined by the Planning Director to be of major importance to the City. Projects of communitywide significance are presented to the City Council for informational purposes. The proposed project involves the construction of 227 housing units and qualifies as a project of communitywide significance.

This report provides a project description, identifies the anticipated entitlement and environmental review processes, and summarizes key areas of concern regarding Zoning Code and General Plan compliance.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The applicant's proposal includes the following:

- Demolition of existing on-site improvements;
- Creation of a Planned Development zoning district that would rezone associated parcels from CL to PD;
- Construction of a new, four to five story mixed use building totaling 255,946 square feet and including the following:
 - 227 multi-family rental units with no on-site affordable housing
 - 4,496 square feet of ground floor commercial space
 - 365 parking spaces (two subterranean levels)

The PD zoning district is intended for sites where an applicant proposes and the City desires to achieve a particular mix of uses, appearance, land use compatibility, or special sensitivity to neighborhood character. The rezoning of a site to the PD district requires simultaneous approval of a PD Plan. The plan would prescribe development standards and allowed or conditionally allowed uses in the PD. The 87 dwelling unit per acre base density proposed is consistent with the maximum residential density allowed on the General Plan Land Use Diagram for the project site. Creation of a PD is a legislative action and the City Council has discretion when considering such a request.

PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW ANALYSIS:

All applicable City departments reviewed the project as part of the PPR process and provided comments that are included in Attachment A. The applicant has subsequently submitted for Preliminary Consultation, which is tentatively scheduled with the City's Design Commission on August 11, 2020. Notable preliminary Planning-related comments are discussed throughout the following sections of the report.

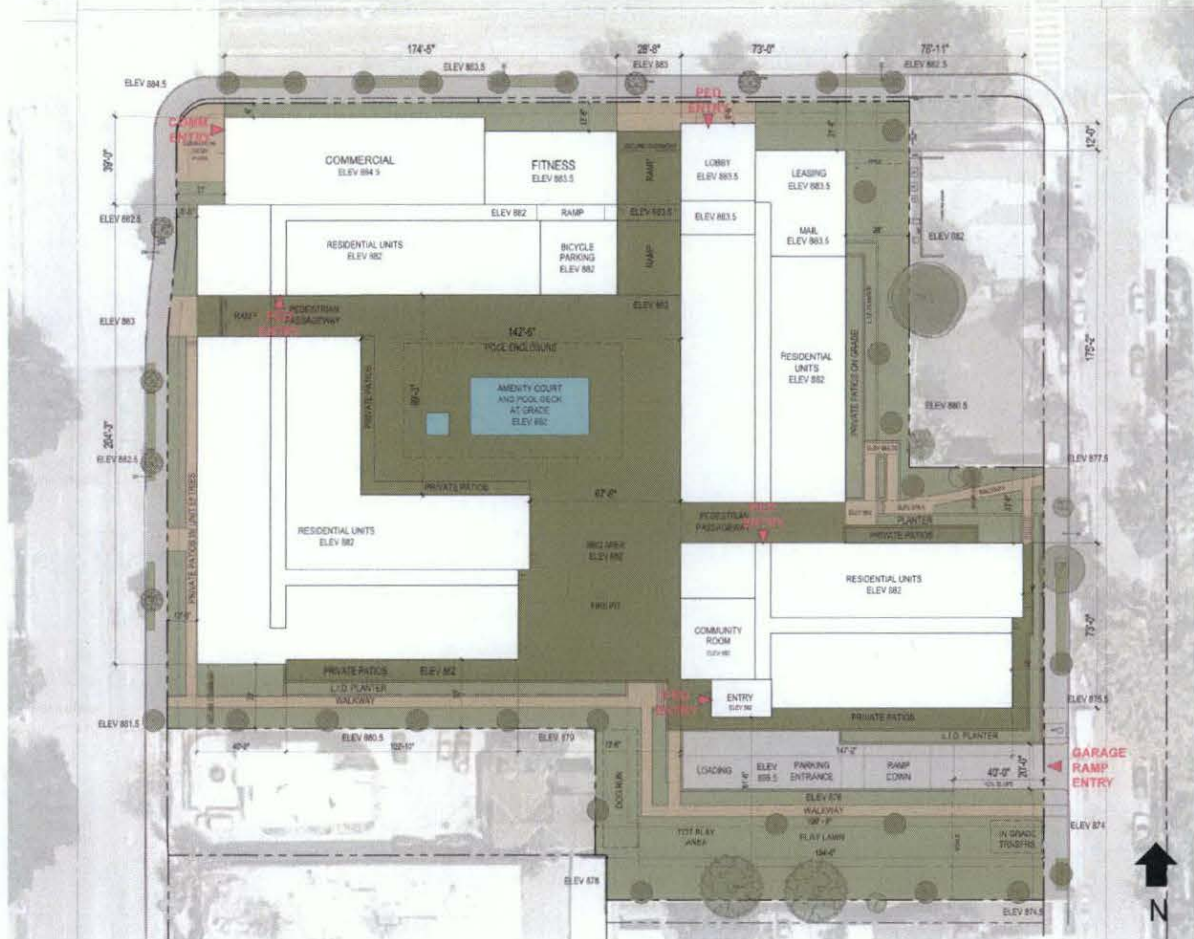
Existing Context

Surrounding lots along N. Los Robles Avenue are developed with two-story multi-family residential buildings, while E. Villa Street contains predominantly single-story commercial buildings. North Oakland Avenue, which is located to the rear of the subject property, is predominantly developed with two-story single-family homes, with the exception of the parcel at the corner of N. Oakland Avenue and E. Villa Street, which is developed with an 11-story multi-family residential building. The following is an aerial view of the existing site and its surrounding areas as well as a site plan of the proposed project.

Figure 1: Aerial View of Existing Condition



Figure 2: Proposed Site Plan



The proposed project has numerous features that contribute to neighborhood compatibility despite the fact that its height would exceed that of most existing buildings along N. Los Robles and Villa. The use of ground floor residential entries along N. Los Robles is consistent with pedestrian-oriented housing characteristics and will create more activity along the street, while the commercial use at the corner of N. Los Robles and E. Villa addresses the commercial character of the south side of E. Villa. Staff comments to the applicant note that further attention be given to the design of this corner, particularly to the location of entries into the commercial space, in order to accentuate the intersection and create a distinctive sense of place. The proposed location of all project parking below grade with a single vehicular entry along the secondary frontage on N. Oakland minimizes the visibility of parking and garages while also limiting the number of curb cuts and enhancing pedestrian safety.

Existing Development Regulations

Through the PD Plan, an applicant can propose their own development standards. Staff evaluates these proposed development standards in consideration of the existing development standards that apply to the base zoning districts; the existing development

standards are in place to implement a vision for the area and to ensure compatibility between sites. As proposed, the project exceeds the following key development standards in the Zoning Code:

Standard	Proposed	Requirement
Height	67'	36'
Density	87 du/acre	32 du/acre
Floor Area Ratio	2.24	0.7

General Plan Vision

According to the General Plan Land Use Diagram, the subject property is designated as Medium Mixed Use (0.0-2.25 FAR; 0-87 du/ac), which is intended to support the development of multi-story buildings with a variety of compatible commercial (retail and office) and residential uses. Development in this land use designation is characterized by shared open spaces, extensive landscaping, small to medium separations between buildings, and shared driveways and parking. Sites may be exclusively commercial or exclusively residential, or with buildings vertically integrating housing with non-residential uses. Where buildings face the street frontage, they shall be designed to enhance pedestrian activity with transparent facades for retail uses and distinctive entries for housing. Parking shall be located below or to the rear of the street. Projects constructed at Medium Mixed Use densities may be required to develop pedestrian-oriented streetscape amenities along their primary street frontages, consistent with the improvement concepts and plans defined by the City.

Based on the size of the site, the subject property would allow up to 590 residential units and up to 257,353 square feet of floor area based on the maximum allowable General Plan density of 87 dwelling units per acre and 2.25 floor area ratio. The proposed project includes 227 units and 255,946 square feet of floor area, which are within the General Plan maximums. The project plans show a central, open air courtyard with a pool located at the ground level that would be accessible to residents in addition to a fitness center, community room, and other residential amenities space. These amenities are consistent with the Medium Mixed-Use land use designation. The N. Los Robles frontage includes residential units on the ground floor with unit access from the street, as well as a pedestrian passage entry leading to the central courtyard and other connecting pedestrian paseos. The E. Villa frontage includes ground floor commercial at the corner of N. Los Robles, a fitness center and building lobby with transparent facades, and a second pedestrian passage entry also leading to the central courtyard and other connecting paseos. The ground floor of the project along its two main street frontages on E. Villa and N. Los Robles incorporates good pedestrian-oriented design principles, including transparency, commercial activity, residential entries, and pedestrian paseo access, and are consistent with the Medium Mixed-Use land use designation.

Massing and Scale

The height of the proposed project is substantially taller than surrounding developments (with the exception of the 11-story Pilgrim residential tower to the east, which is approximately 100 feet in height). The site is located within an area that has an established height limit of 36 feet, while the project proposes a height up to 67 feet. The use of pedestrian passageways creates multiple openings along both street-facing facades and separates the massing of the project, resulting in the appearance of two distinct building masses. Through the design review process the applicant will work with the Design and Historic Preservation staff and the Design Commission to find ways to soften the building mass to reduce the “blocky” appearance of the current design. Stepping down strategic corners of the buildings also contributes toward a softer transition of the building height to adjacent existing structures, and a large landscaped setback from adjacent structures along the N. Oakland frontage also improves the transition from the adjacent lower-scale structures. The following figures demonstrate preliminary massing and scale of the proposed project.

Figure 3: Preliminary Massing

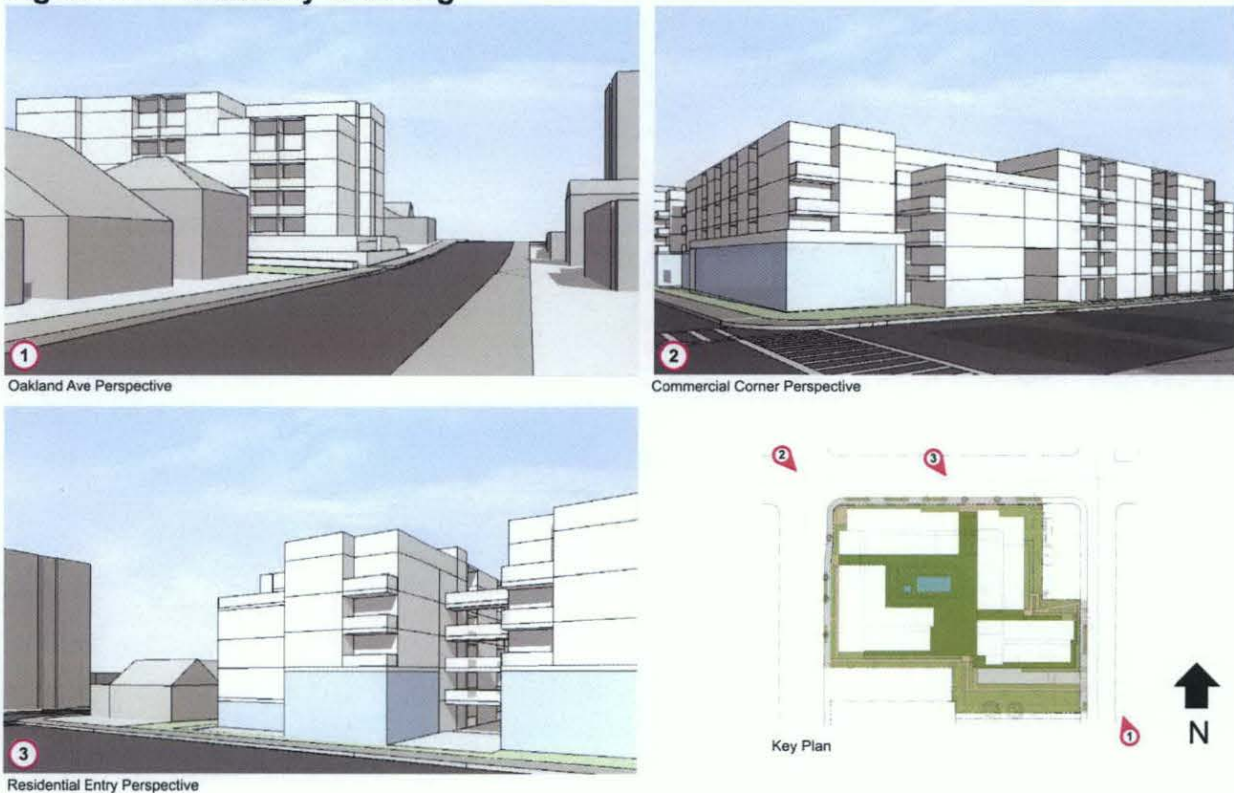
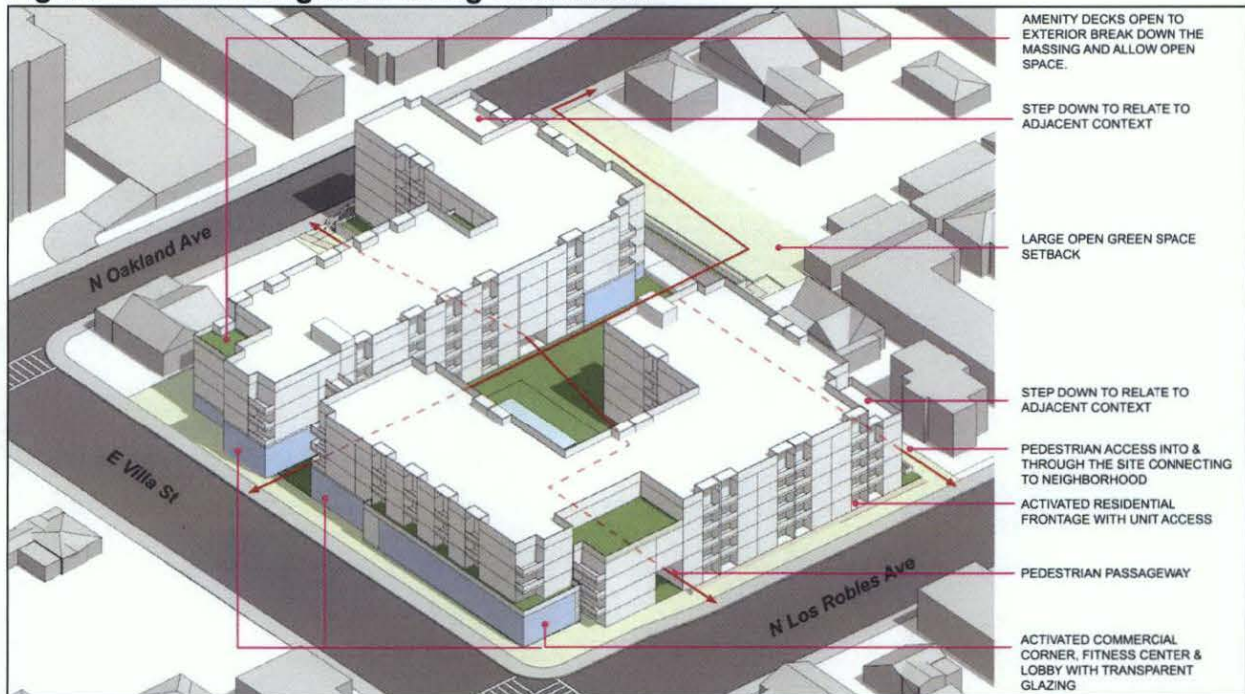


Figure 4: Aerial Diagram Facing Southeast



Northwest Area Considerations

The proposed project is located within the Northwest area of the City; specifically, on a relatively large site near the Northwest's southern boundary. The proposed density is consistent with the maximum allowable density pursuant to the Land Use Diagram. The project would provide community-oriented uses, such as housing and commercial, rather than institutional uses, consistent with General Plan Land Use Policy 40.2, which calls for limiting overconcentration of institutional uses by prohibiting new development of uses such as Adult Day Care, Convalescent Facilities, Maintenance and Services Facilities, or other similar use classifications. Construction of a new mixed-use development project with commercial uses on the ground floor would contribute to community revitalization and provide opportunities for jobs and housing for local residents. Staff has strongly encouraged the applicant to conduct outreach to residents and businesses in the Northwest community to obtain input and ensure that the project supports the local community.

PLANNED DEVELOPMENT ENTITLEMENT PROCESS:

The applicant has indicated that they intend to pursue entitlement of a Planned Development (PD). The scope of the proposed project would require the following reviews:

Environmental Review -

This project will be subject to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Additional environmental studies, including an Initial Study, may be needed to determine what type of CEQA analysis is required for the project.

Planned Development -

- 1. Planning Commission:** The Planning Commission shall consider the application for reclassification to a PD zoning district and shall, at the same time, consider the proposed PD plan accompanying the application. The Commission shall make a written recommendation to the City Council whether to approve, approve in modified form, or disapprove the proposed amendment.
- 2. City Council:** Planned Developments are heard by the City Council. Upon receipt of the Commission's recommendation, the City Council shall, approve, approve in modified form, or disapprove the proposed amendment.

Design Review -

- 1. Preliminary Consultation-Design Review:** This project must be reviewed by the Design Commission through the Preliminary Consultation process for preliminary advisory comments. This is tentatively scheduled to occur on August 11, 2020.
- 2. Concept & Final-Design Review:** This project must be reviewed by the Design Commission through the Concept and Final Design Review process.

At minimum, public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council are required for the Planned Development application, with the Planning Commission acting as a recommendation body and the City Council as an approval body. Upon submittal of an official application, the steps included in the review process are as follows:

- Applicant submits Planned Development application;
- Conduct environmental review per CEQA;
- Conduct a noticed public hearing before the Planning Commission;
- Conduct a noticed public hearing before the City Council for: (1) review and approval of the PD district and the PD plan; and (2) consideration of adoption of the environmental determination;
- Conduct a noticed public hearing before the Design Commission for Concept/Final design approvals.

FISCAL IMPACT:

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

Respectfully submitted,



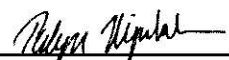
DAVID M. REYES
Director of Planning & Community
Development

Prepared by:

Concurred by:



Andre Sahakian
Senior Planner



Talyr Mirzakhania
Planning Manager

Approved by:



STEVE MERMELL
City Manager

Attachments: (3)

Attachment A – Predevelopment Plan Review Comments to Applicant
Attachment B – Project Summary Table of Development Standards
Attachment C – Predevelopment Plan Review Plans