

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL DATE: DECEMBER 16, 2002

FROM: CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW FOR THE PROPOSED
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE FORMER STUART
PHARMACEUTICAL SITE - 3360 EAST FOOTHILL BOULEVARD

RECOMMENDATION

This report is being provided for information purposes only.

BACKGROUND

This project summary is being presented to the City Council as part of the Predevelopment Plan Review (PPR) guidelines, which directs the PPR report for projects of community-wide significance to the City Council for information purposes. SMV/BRE Partners LLC have submitted a proposal to develop a portion of the former Stuart Pharmaceutical site with multi-family residential. This property is located within the East Pasadena Specific Plan area Sub-area d2.

This is the second PPR report presented to the City Council for this site. In November 2000, staff presented a previous proposal, which involved the development of the entire site with offices for research and development purposes. The Specific Plan anticipated development at this site and Chapter 5 - Design Guidelines for the Transit Station reflects the office proposal.

On July 29, 2002, the applicant submitted a new application for Pre-Development Plan Review. Comments were received from city departments and were presented to the applicants on August 28, 2002. Since the PPR meeting, the City and the applicant have been in discussions regarding revisions to the proposed project. What is presented to the City Council is the information contained in the PPR application

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

SMV/BRE Partners, LLC are proposing to construct a 200-unit multifamily complex located adjacent to the Sierra Madre Villa Light Rail Station on the south side of Foothill Boulevard between Sierra Madre Villa Avenue and Halstead Street. The site is divided into three parcels. The MTA owns the parcel at the south side of the site where the parking structure is under construction. SMV Technology Partners, LLC owns the parcel on the west side of the site where future 250,000 square feet office buildings may be located; and SMV/BRE Partners, LLC owns the parcel upon which the subject residential project is proposed (See Attachment 1–Conceptual Site Plan – Sheet A1). This parcel includes most of the historic portions of the Stuart Pharmaceutical Company Building.

The proposed project consists of 1) the preservation of some significant portions of the existing Stuart Pharmaceutical Company building and landscaping; 2) the demolition of the remainder structures on the site and 3) the construction of a residential complex with four levels of residential units over a two-level 300-car parking structure (one level above, one level below grade), adjacent to the parking structure for the Sierra Madre Villa Gold Line Light Rail station. The light rail station, which is currently under construction, is located in the median of the Foothill Freeway (I-210) to the south of the site.

The East Pasadena Specific Plan, which covers the site, allows for a residential density of 60 units per acre at or near the light rail station and requires adherence to the RM-48 Multifamily (Urban) Residential Standards. As proposed the project parcel measures 172,249 square feet. The project, as currently designed, would have a residential density of 52 units per acre.

The surrounding land uses consist of the I-210 Freeway and the MTA parking garage to the south, public storage and the City of Pasadena Fire Department Station No. 37 (3430 East Foothill Boulevard) to the east, office complex to the west and the Hastings Village to the north.

REVIEW OF DISCRETIONARY ACTIONS

The purpose of pre-development plan review (PPR) in Chapter 17.84 of the zoning code is to identify the requirements of various City departments, to offer direction to developers about their projects and to present a schedule and sequence for entitlements and permits for the new construction.

Planning Reviews

Environmental Review: The Environmental Impact Report for the East Pasadena Specific Plan analyzed development at this site, primarily office and research and development. However, since this is a new proposal, an Initial Study will need to be prepared to look at potential environmental impacts, including impacts on the Stuart Pharmaceutical Building. The Transportation Department has indicated that a traffic impact report will be required.

General Plan Consistency: The site is designated as Specific Plan in the Land Use diagram and located in the East Pasadena Specific Plan area.

East Pasadena Specific Plan: The East Pasadena Specific Plan developed significant criteria and design requirements for this site. The proposed project is to construct an 186,885-foot complex with 200 residential units (188 market rate and 12 affordable units). The project consists of four new courtyards with buildings surrounding each courtyard. A fifth building is proposed to be adjacent to the existing pool and courtyard. The height of the buildings is at 60 feet, which is consistent with the East Pasadena Specific Plan height.

Until completion of Kinneloa Avenue, and Walnut and Maple Streets, there is an interim limit on new development in the Specific Plan. During this Interim Limited Development period, the maximum number of units that can be built in sub-area d2 is 188. The applicant proposes to build 200 units, thereby exceeding the Interim Limited limit by 12 units, making the proposed project inconsistent with the East Pasadena Specific Plan.

The Specific Plan provided details for the development of the site, specifically the preservation of the Stuart Pharmaceutical Building and grounds. Preservation of most significant portions of building and its landscaping is mandatory. These include: 1) Portions of the original building including the atrium, the lobby and front corridor, the wall screens, and the reflecting pool, 2) the landscaped parking court and landscaped podium in front of the building; and 3) The pool, shade pavilion, and landscaped courtyard bordering the south edge of the landscaped courtyard east of the building. The project does not meet all of these requirements, specifically maintaining the preservation of the shade pavilion in its present location and the encroachment into the sunken courtyard.

The East Pasadena Specific Plan designates all projects located within ¼ mile of the rail transit boarding area to be a Transit Oriented Development (TOD), and requires mandatory findings for the approval of these projects. According to the Specific Plan, TODs are to consist of a use, or mix of uses that encourages transit use and is oriented toward the transit rider. Housing is considered a transit destination point and is therefore consistent with this goal.

Planning Assessment: The following lists the significant comments:

The project site is zoned EPSP-d2-CG. Housing is a permitted use in this area and subject to the RM-48 Urban Standards. The RM-48 Urban Standards require side and rear yard setbacks of 10 feet. The side yard setback would be applied to interior yards not located along a street side. This includes both yards abutting the lot on the southwest corner of Foothill Boulevard and Halstead, the westernmost property line, the property line adjacent to the commercial building, and the property line abutting the Gold Line parking structure and right of way. In addition, the front yard setback along Halstead is required to be 10 feet. This requirement was provided by the East Pasadena Specific Plan. The applicant has submitted an application for a Variance to allow encroachment into this 10-foot setback. This encroachment is adjacent to a required dedication of property for right-of-way purposes to create a "kiss and ride" drop off area for the light rail station.

Density Calculation: Based on the lot size provided by the applicant of 167,691 square feet, the site would have 52 units per acre.

- Grade Elevation: The RM-48 Urban Development Standards require a Conditional Use Permit whenever it is proposed to elevate the natural grade more than three feet. The difference in the grading will occur because of the slope from the front of the property to the rear.
- Parking: The number of parking spaces will be dependent on the size of the units and the relationship of the site to the light rail station.
- Building Modulation: Building modulation is required. If this is not met, a variance application will be required.

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places at the statewide level of significance, the Stuart Pharmaceutical Company Plant and Office Building (Edward Durrell Stone; completed in 1958) is an exceptional example of mid-century "Neo-Formalist" architecture. The landscape design is also a major work in Southern California of landscape architect Thomas D. Church. Widely acclaimed at the time of its construction, the building continues to be recognized as an important example of industrial and office design from the 1950s and as a prototype for filigree screen walls. In addition to the building, there are three major site features that are important assets to the city and to the community character of East Pasadena: the swimming pool, a freestanding shade pavilion, which has deteriorated to the extent that it will need to be rebuilt, and the landscaped courtyard.

The following summarizes specific site concerns:

- Massing and density: The stacked units along the east courtyard obliterates the shade pavilion, truncates the open space of the sunken courtyard, and intercepts the east end of the original colonnade which extends – at street level – across the parking court.
- Restoration: The changes proposed for the sunken courtyard may violate the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, and the detailed development standards in the specific plan for adaptive use of the property.
- Landscaping: The treatment and restoration of the landscaping, moat and lighting in front of the western portion of the building should be integrated into the rehabilitation of the building.
- Siting: Siting becomes more problematic along the perimeters of the project, specifically the proximity of dwelling units on Halstead Avenue to the driveway for buses and vehicles using the parking structures; the abutment of four levels of apartments (over podium parking) next to a towering wall along the south end of the site which is approximately 50 feet in height.

Trees. There are several significant trees located on the site and were part of the original landscape design including the multi-trunk Mediterranean fan palm. The site plan shows the removal of 13 Ficus retusa/Indian Laurel Fig that are all less than the 30 inch dbh protection size for the species.

INCLUSIONARY HOUSING ORDINANCE

A Certificate of Compliance, recognizing that the lots were split in accordance with the Subdivision Map Act and local ordinances, was approved by the City on September 10, 2002 and recorded on September 12, 2002. The Inclusionary Housing Plan application indicates the Inclusionary Housing units will be built on site and distributed throughout the site with the following mix of units. Based on 200 units at 6% the applicant is required to provide 12 inclusionary units.

TIMELINE

Dates	Activity
7/29/92	PPR Application Received
8/28/02	PPR Meeting Held
9/10/02	Received Certificate of Compliance for recordation of parcels conveyed from the Blue Line Construction Authority to SMV Technology Partners, LLC and SMV/BRE Partners, LLC. (Certificated recorded on 9/12/02)
10/19/02	Community Meeting held by applicants
12/16/02	PPR Presentation to City Council
3/03	Zoning Hearing Officer public hearing on Variances and Conditional Use Permit
Spring 2003	Design Review

FISCAL IMPACT

The applicant will pay fees for the discretionary actions required for the project. The project will also generate plan check and permit fees, and construction tax, in amounts that cannot be determined at this time. In addition, the project will generate increased revenues from property taxes.


Respectfully submitted,


Cynthia J. Kurtz
City Manager

Prepared by:


Carol Hunt Hernandez
Planner

Approved by:

JR 
Richard J. Bruckner
Director of Planning and Development

Attachments:

1. Site plan and elevations for the project
2. PPR comments from city departments

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