

Agenda Report

May 5, 2014

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: **PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW OF PROJECT LOCATED AT 277 NORTH EL MOLINO AVENUE**

RECOMMENDATION:

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

BACKGROUND:

Summerhill Apartment Communities has submitted a Predevelopment Plan Review (PPR) application to redevelop the property located at the southwest corner of Corson Street and El Molino Avenue, at 277 North El Molino Avenue. The project includes demolition of two existing structures on-site currently used as a religious facility, and construction of a new six-story structure containing 105 residential units over one-level of at grade parking and one-level of subterranean parking. A total of 159 parking spaces are proposed within the two level parking structure.

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 projects, 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 them and the public of significant projects. The total number of units proposed as part of this development project is 105 units.

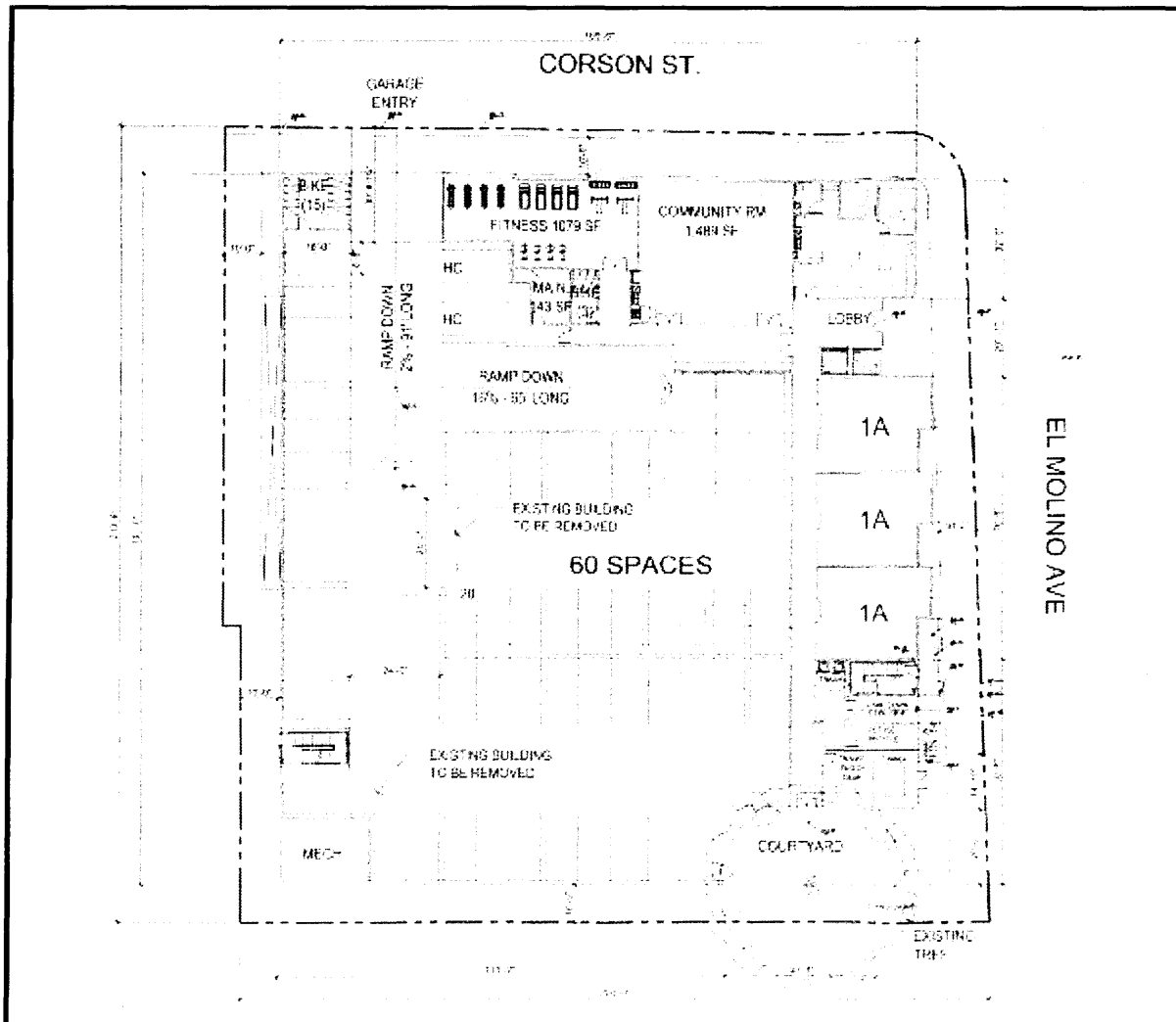
This report provides a project description, identifies the entitlement and environmental review processes, and important topic areas that staff will focus on during case processing.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The site is located on the southwest corner of Corson Street and El Molino Avenue and has a total size of approximately 42,710 square feet. Currently, the site is occupied by the Pasadena Church of Religious Science. The property is developed with two two-story buildings and surface parking lot. The project includes:

- Demolition of the two-story buildings; and
- Construction of a new six-story, 75'-0" high, residential building containing 105 units over one level of at-grade parking and one level of subterranean parking containing a total of 159 parking spaces.

The proposed site plan is shown below.



Project Statistics:

Zoning Designation:		
Central District Specific Plan, Walnut Housing sub-area (CD-3)		
General Plan Designation:		
Central District Specific Plan		
Lot Size:		
42,710 square feet (or 0.98 acres)		
Proposed Building Size:		
118,350 square feet		
Floor Area Ratio (per Figure 3-9 – Central District Maximum Floor Area Ratio):		
Maximum Permitted		Proposed
2.25 or 96,097 square feet		2.77 or 118,350 square feet
Residential Density (per Figure 3-6 – Central District Maximum Residential Density):		
Maximum Allowed	Maximum Allowed with 30% Density Bonus	Proposed
87 du/acre or 85 units	111 units	105 units
Parking Requirement (for projects utilizing density bonus):		
Required		Proposed
0 – 1 bedroom: 1 space		52 1-bedroom units: 52 spaces
2 -3 bedrooms: 2 spaces		53 2-bedroom units: 106 spaces
4 or more bedrooms: 2.5 spaces		none
Total Required: 158 spaces		Total Proposed: 159 spaces
Building Height (per Figure 3-8 – Central District Maximum Height):		
Maximum Permitted		Proposed
60' or 75' when utilizing height averaging		75'
Setbacks (per Figure 3-7 – Central District Required Setbacks and Section 17.50.350):		
Required		Proposed
Along El Molino Ave: min 5' required, max 10' permitted		10'
Along Corson Street: min 10' required		10'
Interior Side: min 10' required		Less than 10'
Rear: min 10' required		10'

The project site is zoned CD-3 (Central District Specific Plan, Walnut Housing subdistrict), with a maximum residential density of 87 dwelling units per acre and a maximum floor area ratio of 2.25. For the subject 42,710 square foot lot, a total of 85 residential units are permitted by right. Through the Density Bonus provisions under Section 17.43.040 of the City's Zoning Code, projects may be granted a density bonus of up to 35 percent above the maximum density. The proposed 105 units represent a 23.5 percent increase in density. Pursuant to State law, projects that utilize the density bonus provisions may request one or more concessions, subject to certain findings. The proposed gross floor area of the new building is 118,350 square feet, which equates to 2.77 floor area ratio. If the project moves forward as proposed, an Affordable Housing Concession Permit would be required to increase the floor area ratio from the allowed 2.25 to 2.77.

Discretionary Entitlements:

Based on the information submitted to-date, the proposed project would require two discretionary entitlements:

- Affordable Housing Concession Permit to increase the maximum permitted floor area ratio requirement of 2.25.
- Design Review for a project that exceeds 25,000 square feet in size.
- Height Averaging for a project that exceeds 60-feet in height.

The Affordable Housing Concession Permit would be presented to a Hearing Officer for his/her consideration, along with the appropriate environmental review documentation. The Design Commission is the review authority for Design Review.

PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW SUMMARY:

On March 19, 2014, a meeting was held to discuss the PPR comments with the applicant team and staff from City departments/divisions, including, Zoning Administration, Design & Historic Preservation and Public Works. 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. Below is a summary of some of the PPR comments.

Major Issues for Study:

The major issues that will require further study if a formal application is submitted include:

- Construction adjacent or near properties that are designated historic resources or resources that are eligible for historic designation. Specifically:
 - The residence at 267 North El Molino Avenue (Lukens House) is located immediately to the south of the project site, was built in 1896 and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places,
 - The residence located at 246 North El Molino Avenue (Frances K. Mason House) is located to the east of the site, was built in 1904 and is eligible for historic designation,
 - The property at 684 Locust Street (to the east) is not eligible for historic designation but should be considered in the planning process in the future;
- Maximum height and height averaging; and
- Placement and design of a required street level landscaped courtyard.

Zoning Code:

The site is zoned CD-3 (Central District Specific Plan, Walnut Housing Subdistrict). The Central District zoning district is governed by Chapter 17.30 of the Zoning Code.

According to Figure 3-4 (Central District Housing/Ground Floor Map), housing is required on the site, but not required on the ground floor therefore the proposed multi-family project is permitted on the site. In addition, staff did provide guidance to the applicant in the PPR comments as noted below.

Height: Per Figure 3-8 (Central District Maximum Height) of the Zoning Code the maximum allowable building height for this site is 60 feet. Utilizing Section 17.30.050.B (Height Averaging) of the Zoning Code the building may be as tall as 75 feet if no more than 30 percent of the building footprint exceeds the height limit and the average height of the entire footprint does not exceed the height limit of 60 feet.

The purposes of height averaging are:

- Additional building height is counterbalanced by lower heights across or elsewhere on a development site to achieve an economically viable project that also protects view corridors and/or historically or architecturally significant building, structures, or landscapes; a visual transition in height and massing may be achieved through height averaging.
- Additional building height is counterbalanced by lower heights across or elsewhere on a development site to punctuate important intersections or other prominent locations; this will contribute to a more visually compelling skyline.

Height averaging is a discretionary approval and requires approval of the Design Commission, provided the following findings are met:

1. The additional height allows for preservation of vistas and view corridors, and/or a more sensitive transition to an adjacent historic structure, and/or provides for a more interesting skyline;
2. The additional height will not be injurious to adjacent properties or uses, or detrimental to environmental quality, quality of life, or the health, safety and welfare of the public;
3. The additional height will promote a superior design solution that enhances the property and its surroundings, without detrimental impacts on views and sight lines; and
4. The additional height is consistent with the objectives and policies of the Central District Specific Plan and the General Plan.

Based on the information presented, these findings may not be able to be met. From the submitted information, staff is not able to confirm that no more than 30 percent of the building footprint exceeds the height limit of 60 feet. As the project proceeds, the applicant will be required to provide more detailed information to ensure height averaging is complied with in order to request this approval of the Design Commission. Additionally, the Design Commission may impose additional conditions related to site planning, architectural design, as well as requiring public amenities, including public outdoor space and pedestrian paths.

Setbacks: Per Figure 3-7 (Central District Required Setbacks) of the Zoning Code the minimum required building setbacks are as follows:

- El Molino Avenue (Setback Type 2): Minimum required setback is five feet. Maximum allowed setback is ten feet; and
- Corson St. (Setback Type 3): Minimum required setback is ten feet.

In addition, per Section 17.50.350 (Urban Housing) of the Zoning Code, a ten foot minimum setback is required for the rear and interior sides of the site. However, through the Design Review process these rear and interior side setbacks can be reduced if the reduction results in a larger courtyard. Furthermore, per Section 17.50.350.J, balconies may project no closer than six feet to an interior or rear property line and four feet into a front or corner side setback.

From the preliminary plans submitted to the City, it appears that a portion of the proposed structure is encroaching into the required 10'-0" south side yard setback. As the project proceeds, the applicant will be required to revise the project to comply with the minimum setback requirement along all property lines, and provide more detailed information regarding the setback of the proposed balconies.

Although the maximum permitted setback along El Molino Avenue is 10 feet, as noted in the Public Works Department comments below, a 10 to 12 foot setback is recommended to protect the existing street trees. Per Section 17.30.050.A.1, exceptions to the setback may be encouraged for the purpose of protecting the character of a significant landscape, such as street trees.

Parking: Per Section 17.50.340.D.3 of the Zoning Code, the residential parking requirement for projects located within the Transit Oriented Development Area is one parking space for each unit less than 650 square feet up to a maximum of 1.25 spaces per unit. If a unit measures more than 650 square feet, then a minimum of 1.5 spaces, up to 1.75 spaces are required. Additionally, one guest parking space is required for every 10 residential units.

Pursuant to Section 17.43.090 of the Zoning Code, projects utilizing the density bonus provisions may request the following alternative parking requirements:

0 – 1 bedroom:	1 on-site parking space
2 – 3 bedrooms:	2 on-site parking spaces
4 or more bedrooms:	2.5 on-site parking spaces

The applicant opted to utilize the alternative parking requirement. According to the information submitted, 52 one bedroom units are proposed, and 53 two bedroom units are proposed. Based on this composition, a total of 158 parking spaces are required. A total of 159 parking spaces are proposed to comply with the minimum parking requirement.

Open Space: Section 17.50.350.E (Urban Housing) of the Zoning Code includes requirements for open space in residential projects. The minimum requirement for open space is 30 percent of the net floor area of the project. Net floor area is defined as the total size of the project, minus garages, hallways, lobbies, elevators, and other common space.

Open Spaces includes private balconies, at-grade patios, rooftop gardens (including upper level terraces), and a portion of a front or corner side (but not interior side or rear) yard that exceeds the minimum setback requirement. However, any of these areas that are intended to count towards the open space requirement must have a minimum dimension of six feet in each direction. Further, balconies may count for a maximum of 35 percent of the total open space requirement.

When more detailed plans are developed, the net floor area of the project will be determined. At this point, the required minimum open space requirements cannot be determined.

Courtyard: Per Section 17.50.350.F (Urban Housing) of the Zoning Code a ground-floor landscaped courtyard is required. The courtyard must be at least 20 feet in every dimension. Balconies may project up to four feet into the courtyard area.

Section 17.50.350.G lists the courtyard opening requirements as described below. As the proposed building has a street frontage that is 75 feet or greater in size, there must be an opening to the courtyard from the street. Please note that for projects such as this, with multiple street frontages, it is through the Design Review process that the frontages required to have openings will be determined.

The minimum height of the opening shall be a minimum of 50 percent of the overall height of the structure, but not more than 25 feet. The minimum required width is ten feet and if the depth of the opening leading to the courtyard is greater than 30 feet, the ten-foot width shall be increased by one foot for every three feet of depth more than 30 feet. Any gate that is placed across the courtyard opening must be at least 50 percent open. Finally, all courtyard opening requirements of Section 17.50.350.G can be modified through the Design Review process.

From the submitted plans, a courtyard is proposed on the southeast corner of the property, at the street level visible from El Molino Avenue. Although the courtyard complies with the minimum dimensions, opening requirement and visibility from street, staff is encouraging the applicant to connect the landscaped courtyard with a proposed upper level pool area.

Design and Historic Preservation:

Design Review: Design Review is required, per Section 17.61.030 of the Zoning Code, as the project exceeds 10,000 square feet in size, with the Design Commission as the

review authority. Preliminary Consultation will be required prior to the submittal of a Conditional Use Permit application.

Following are some of the specific design-related topic areas that were highlighted by staff:

Massing: A preliminary massing study has not been provided with the submittal package, and care should be taken in creating a building form that appropriately responds to the existing context, especially the historic resource immediately to the south. As the project design becomes more fully developed, consideration should be given to further breaking down the mass of the structure overall with greater articulation of the roofline or parapet, inserting recesses in the building form that allow for meaningful landscaped areas at the ground level and stepping the mass to respond to lower scaled buildings and historic resources on the periphery of the site. In addition, architectural studies of ways in which the upper communal courtyard area of the project can break the building façade and, possibly, allow views to the mountains from the courtyard space, while creating a visual connection to the public realm and greater activation of the street-facing elevations should be undertaken. Early studies of the materiality and coloration of the structure should also be closely reviewed that help to further reduce the perceived scale of the building mass and relate the building to other residential structures near the site. Finally, a narrative has not been provided that sets forth the proposed architectural logic for the formulation of the building form and stylistic associations at this site and should be developed in conjunction with a close contextual study of the neighborhood.

Siting: A multi-family project is generally well suited for this location, but as referenced below, greater consideration should be given in the massing of the structure to appropriately respond to the nationally register listed historic resource adjacent to the site and other eligible historic resources on the periphery.

Compatibility: No specific building designs have been presented for review at this time. Because the drawings submitted are not sufficiently detailed, staff cannot comment on the new building's architectural compatibility with its surroundings or its consistency with the applicable design guidelines; however, the City of Pasadena's objective is to achieve architectural and design excellence. Buildings should improve the environment for the public, respond to their context and be compatible to the surroundings. To this end, it should be further understood and considered that the project lies adjacent or near properties that are designated historic resources or resources that are eligible for historic designation. The architectural character of the surrounding area is generally mixed; however, the project should endeavor to create a site-specific design that responds to the architectural legacy of the City and the character of the existing historic fabric. The residence at 267 North El Molino Avenue (Lukens House) is located immediately to the south of the project site and was built in 1896 and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It should also be noted that the residence located at 246 North El Molino Avenue (to the east of the site—Frances K. Mason House) was built in 1904 and is eligible for historic designation. The property at 684 Locust Street

(to the east) is not eligible for historic designation but should be considered in the planning process in the future. As part of an architectural study for the style and massing of the proposed building, it is suggested that the design team explore ways to create a site-specific design that reinforces the quality architecture in the vicinity of the project that exists. In addition, the aforementioned historic resources provide a vital architectural context for the proposed building and should be closely examined as the project moves forward to, possibly, glean stylistic and massing cues for the new architecture at the site.

General Plan:

Policies and Objectives: Several of the General Plan Land Use Policies and Objectives that would apply to the proposed project include:

- *OBJECTIVE 1 - TARGETED DEVELOPMENT: Direct higher density development away from Pasadena's residential neighborhoods and into targeted areas, creating an exciting urban core with diverse economic, housing, cultural and entertainment opportunities.*

The proposed project is located within the CD3 – Walnut Housing, an area targeted for higher density urban residential character in the CDSP. The proposed project will place high-density housing within walking distance to the Lake Avenue Rail Station and will balance the institutional growth and historic preservation activities of Fuller Seminary located within the area.

- *OBJECTIVE 3 – AFFORDABLE HOUSING: Encourage the retention and creation of affordable housing throughout Pasadena by providing sufficient land and densities to develop new affordable housing.*

The project currently proposes eight affordable housing units, or seven percent of the total units.

The General Plan designation of the project site is Specific Plan. In this case, it falls within the area defined in the Land Use Diagram as the Central District Specific Plan (CDSP). The purpose of the specific plan is to include a diverse mix of land uses designed to create the primary business, financial, retailing and government center of the City. The 1994 General Plan established caps for residential and non-residential development in each of the specific plan areas. The proposed new 105 units are within the development intensities of 5,095 units and 6,217,000 of non-residential square feet in the Land Use Element of this specific plan area. The CDSP is further broken down into sub-districts, with the project site located within CD3 – Walnut Housing.

Public Works Department:

In addition to various infrastructure improvements such as installing new sidewalks and drive approaches to meet current City standards, Public Works informed the applicant of

a number of other topics related to the proposed project, several of which are detailed below.

Corner Rounding – Land Dedication: In order to accommodate 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 southwest corner of Corson Street and El Molino Avenue.

Street Trees: All tree removals shown on the plans are subject to the review by the Urban Forestry Advisory Committee (UFAC), which provides a recommendation to the City Manager. All drive approaches shall be at least five feet clear of existing trees.

In order to protect the canopy of the existing street trees, the following conditions are required:

1. Corson Street frontage - The building setback shall be 8 to 10 feet.
2. El Molino Avenue frontage - The building setback shall be 10 to 12 feet.

Transportation/Traffic:

The thresholds identified in the City's Traffic Impact Review Guidelines require that a Traffic Impact Study be conducted for the project. The Study will be considered as part of the environmental review of the project.

Driveway Configuration: The driveway and apron shall have a minimum width of 18-feet to accommodate 2-way traffic. And to improve the safety of pedestrians crossing the driveway, the design plans shall indicate a slope of 2 percent or less from the property line to 20-feet into the property to improve vehicular sight distance, or include the installation of an exit arm.

Access: It is recommended that a second access location off Corson Street be constructed to provide more vehicular circulation alternatives into and out of the parking garage.

Environmental Review:

Pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), an environmental review of the project will occur in order to analyze the project's potential to result in significant impacts, as identified by State and local environmental guidelines. At this time it is not known what level of review will be required; that will be decided after the Affordable Housing Concession Permit application is submitted.

NEXT STEPS:

Public hearings before the Hearing Officer and Design Commission are necessary in order to carry out the proposed project. In addition, an environmental review will occur

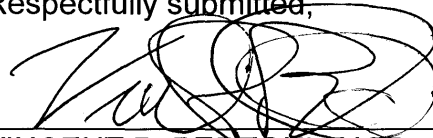
consistent with the requirements of CEQA. The following identifies the steps in the review process:

- Preliminary Consultation before the Design Commission;
- Environmental Review;
- Hearing Officer Public Hearing to consider adoption of the environmental review and approval of the Affordable Housing Concession Permit; and
- Design Commission reviews (Concept and Final).

FISCAL IMPACT:

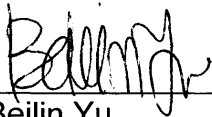
This report is for information only and will not result in any fiscal impact.

Respectfully submitted,



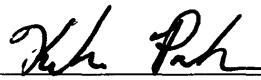
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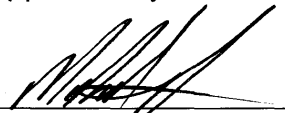
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Attachment:

Attachment A – Predevelopment Plan Review Plans