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SECONDARY SUBMISSIONS



Department of City Planning

City Hall, 200 N. Spring Street, Room 525, Los Angeles, CA 90012

February 8, 2024

TO: Central Area Planning Commission

FROM: Valentina Knox-Jones, City Planner

TECHNICAL MODIFICATIONS/CORRECTIONS TO THE STAFF RECOMMENDATION REPORT FOR CASE NO. APCC-2017-2525-SPE-SPP-SPPA; 4652-4658 WEST LA MIRADA AVENUE

The following technical modifications are to be incorporated into the staff recommendation report to be considered at the Central Area Planning Commission meeting of February 13, 2024, related to Item No. 5 on the meeting agenda.

Deleted text is shown in ~~striketrough~~ and added text is shown in underline.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

[MODIFY Recommended Action No. 1, Page 2]

1. FIND, ~~the project is exempt from~~ the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to Public Resources Code 21080(b)(5) and pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, Section 15074 and 15270, does not apply to the project as a project that is rejected or disapproved.

Entitlement Findings

[MODIFY Entitlement Finding No. 1.e., Page F-3]

- 1.e. The granting of the exception is not consistent with the principles, intent and goals of the specific plan and any applicable element of the general plan.

[MODIFY Entitlement Finding No. 2.b., Page F-6]

- 2.b. The project incorporates mitigation measures, monitoring measures when necessary, or alternatives identified in the environmental review, which would mitigate the negative environmental effects of the project, to the extent physically feasible.

The proposed project does not require review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because CEQA does not apply to the proposed project. When a project is denied by the Department of City Planning, ~~it is exempt under~~ CEQA does not apply pursuant to Public Resources Code 21080(b)(5) and CEQA Guidelines, Section 15061(b)(4) and 15270. No further environmental review is required.

All changes herein are entirely administrative and serve to correct inadvertent omissions/errors and do not substantially alter any portion of the staff recommendation report, including analysis and findings.

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Ref: 81893-0001

February 9, 2024

BY EMAIL

President Maleena Lawrence
Members of the Central Area
Planning Commission
200 N. Spring Street, Rm. 272
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Email: apccentral@lacity.org

Re: APCC-2017-2525-SPE-SPP-SPPA
ENV-2020-2784-ND
4652-4658 West La Mirada Avenue
Secondary Submission/Response to Staff Report
Hearing Date: February 13, 2024

Dear President Lawrence and Members of the Central Area Planning Commission:

Our office represents Sunset Mirada LLC, owner and applicant for the above-referenced “Project,” including a Specific Plan Exception and Adjustment, for ten for-sale residential units, consistent with prior approvals on the Property. We respond on their behalf to the staff report, which fails to consider the Project within its context, as well as its consistency with the intent of the Specific Plan, as well as with the City’s General Plan Housing Element. The Area Planning Commission (the “Commission”) should deny the appeal and uphold the decision of the DAA.

1. A Specific Plan Exception, Which the City Previously Granted for the Same Property, is Appropriate for the Project.

In 2006—even before the housing crisis that currently faces the City—the Commission approved a similar small-lot subdivision for ten residential units and adopted the findings to do so.¹ At its essence, the requested action for the Project is necessary for any sustainable Project on the Property, including this one. Without the ability to combine lots, the Project cannot achieve the other goals of the Wilshire-Vermont Station Neighborhood Area Plan (“SNAP”) and increase housing. Further, the Project would

¹ APCC-2005-4752-SPE-SPP, approved on Oct. 2, 2006.

provide the requested units while maintaining the compatibility with its surroundings that the SNAP was intended to protect.

- (a) The strict application of the policies, standards and regulations of the specific plan to the subject property will result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships inconsistent with the general purpose and intent of the Plan. There are exceptional circumstances or conditions that are applicable to the subject property or to the intended use or development of the subject property that do not generally apply to other properties within the specific plan area. The requested exception is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right or use generally possessed by other property within the geographically specific plan in the same zone and vicinity but which, because of such special circumstances and practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships is denied to the property in question.**

The Property is located within the area identified as Subarea A (Neighborhood Conservation) of the SNAP. Among other things, this does not permit, without some form of relief—combinations of lots that would exceed a maximum area of 15,000 s.f. Here, no combination of lots to facilitate the Project would otherwise be possible: the two lots of the Property, when combined, exceed the nominal maximum of 15,000 s.f. only by slightly more than ten percent: about 1,175 s.f. That is, the development simply could not occur without combining the entirety of the Property.

As described in the SNAP and during its adoption, the 15,000 s.f. limit was intended to protect neighborhood character—particularly the appearance of street frontages and overall scale. The Project requires the full Property, and therefore the exception, to achieve a unified development that increases housing supply in a sustainable manner, and that includes adequate open space and on-site parking.

As recognized in the 2006 approval, the Project would provide these units and other required elements without sacrificing neighborhood compatibility. As shown in the proposed site plans, the Project includes full landscaped setbacks from Mirada Avenue. Only two residential units, divided by a common driveway, are located on the Mirada Avenue frontage, maintaining the low-density frontage. The façades of both units include physical articulation and variations in materials that maintain the residential scale and pedestrian orientation of Mirada Avenue. The units themselves exit onto the driveway and associated pathway. Further, the arrangement of buildings buffers the vehicle access point from the adjacent properties. That is, the proposed structures

themselves provide a solid boundary separating on-site circulation from other uses, also furthering the goal of neighborhood preservation.

As described above, the Project is consistent with existing multiple-family development in the immediate area and maintains the scale and pedestrian orientation of its neighborhood. This is only possible with the exception to permit the Project: development of each lot separately would not only render the Project infeasible; it also would require greater use of the Property to provide the required open space and vehicle access and circulation. The individual lots would not allow the provision of significant additional housing units in a feasible manner.

(b) The Project is Consistent with the General Plan.

GP Housing Element (2021-29) emphasizes the acute need for additional housing. Among other things, it includes a constraints analysis (Appx. 2.1) that specifically addresses factors such as site area and certain open space requirements.

The Project addresses a lot area constraint specifically identified in the Housing Element. As the Housing Element analysis states, “plans that effectively provide less buildable area for certain sites may hinder the development of new housing in those locations” as a hindrance to meeting housing goals (p. 6, Appx. 2.1). Here, as described above, the configuration and size of individual lots do not, by themselves, permit the provision of additional housing units in an economically sustainable manner. This request addresses a specific constraint to providing housing, in a manner consistent with the intent of the SNAP.

The Project also addresses an open space constraint specifically identified in the Housing Element. Regarding open space in the context of “Neighborhood Implementation Tools,” the Housing Element’s analysis acknowledges that, “. . . open space requirements can place a strain on potential projects by requiring at least 100 sf of open space per unit” (p. 20, Appx. 2.1). Further, “[t]he additional layers of requirements imposed by these neighborhood-level tools can further limit the height, buildable volume, and number of units that can be built within a housing development” (*id.*). Here, the Project provides the required *amount* of open space, but not in one of the specific *dimensions* provided in the SNAP. The Project’s requested approvals include both the lot combination to permit provision of substantial open space in a particular area, and relief from the single dimension it cannot meet.

Housing Element objectives and policies also emphasize different types and price points of housing, which the Project meets. These include the following:

- Objective 1.2: “[f]acilitate the production of housing, especially projects that include Affordable Housing and/or meet Citywide Housing Priorities”;
- Policy 1.2.1: “[e]xpand rental and for-sale housing for people of all income levels. Prioritize housing developments that result in a net gain of Affordable Housing and serve those with the greatest needs”;
- Policy 1.2.2: “[f]acilitate the construction of a range of different housing types that addresses the particular needs of the city’s diverse households”;
- Policy 1.2.3: “[f]acilitate innovative housing models and promote regulatory reforms that reduce the costs of housing production while also promoting broader Citywide Housing Priorities”; and
- Program 3: “[f]acilitate the development of smaller and new types of subdivisions that permit detached, fee simple home ownership.”

The Project would facilitate an increase in housing units that would both increase the housing stock and broaden the options available for home ownership. Specifically, the Project would include a range of moderately-sized, detached single-family housing. Each of these aspects of the Project is a stated priority of, and is consistent with, the Housing Element.

The General Plan Framework Element also acknowledges, “the [City] has insufficient vacant properties” to accommodate housing needs, and contains relevant objectives and policies, which the Project also meets:

- Policy 4.1.1: “provide sufficient land use and density to accommodate an adequate supply of housing units by type can cost within each City subregion to meet . . . projections”;
- Objective 4.4: “[r]educe regulatory and procedural barriers to increase housing production and capacity in appropriate locations”;

Collectively, housing and related land use policy in the City strongly favors relief for regulations that have the effect of precluding otherwise zoning-compliant projects, such as this one. The Project requests exactly the kinds of relief contemplated in the Framework and Housing Elements, expressly for the purpose of meeting the primary goals stated for the Project’s neighborhood in the SNAP. The prior approval for this property also recognized the benefits of combining the lots and a similar building configuration.

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2. Conclusion

For all of the reasons described above, the Project is both appropriate and necessary to provide additional housing that would expand home ownership opportunities in the City. The Project meets the applicable criteria for the relief specified, and meets the fundamental goals of the SNAP and the City's Housing Element. Therefore, we respectfully request the Commission approve the Project and grant the requested relief, consistent with the prior approved development on the Property.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Neill E. Brower", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

NEILL E. BROWER of
Jeffer Mangels Butler & Mitchell LLP

NB:neb

cc: Valentina Knox-Jones, Department of City Planning (via email)

DAY OF HEARING SUBMISSIONS