



City of Santa Barbara

Community Development Department

Memorandum

DATE: January 28, 2016

TO: Architectural Board of Review

FROM: Planning Division

SUBJECT: 116 E. Cota St. – Basis for Planning Commission Findings to Exceed Building Height Requirement

This memorandum provides the Architectural Board of Review (ABR) with information related to the project proposed at 116 E. Cota Street. The project is scheduled for ABR concept review on February 1, 2015.

Project Description

Proposal for a new four-story mixed-use building adjacent to Plaza Vera Cruz. The project includes 15 two-bedroom, two-bathroom residential rental units and approximately 832 square feet of commercial space. Sixteen covered parking spaces will be provided on the ground level. Residential units will be on the second, third, and fourth floors. A 3,238 square foot roof deck is also proposed. The proposed project qualifies as a Community Benefit Housing Project and will require Planning Commission review and findings to exceed 45 feet in building height. The proposed maximum building height is 58 feet.

This is an AUD Priority Housing development with a proposed density of 61 dwelling units per acre and an average unit size of 827 square feet. The subject parcel is designated Medium-High Density and within the Priority Housing Overlay Area, which allows up to 63 dwelling units per acre.

Zoning Ordinance Consistency

The proposed project has been evaluated for consistency with the Zoning Ordinance and complies with the density, setbacks, open space and parking requirements of the AUD Program. However, in order to propose a building height greater than 45 feet, the Planning Commission must make Community Benefit Project findings, as outlined below.

Environmental Review

Staff has determined that, based on a review of the proposed project, information about existing conditions on the site, and the Master Environmental Assessment (MEA), additional information is necessary before an environmental determination can be made. Due to the project site's location a Phase 1 Archaeological Report must be submitted and approved prior to obtaining Project Design Approval. Additionally, the project must comply with Tier 3 Storm Water Management Program (SWMP) before Final Approval by the ABR.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the ABR review the project and provide comments to assist the Planning Commission in determining whether the proposed height request is appropriate for the subject property and surrounding neighborhood. ABR guidance is specifically requested in the following areas:

1. Neighborhood Compatibility/Character: Using the Project Compatibility Criteria the ABR should assess whether the project's size, mass, bulk, height and scale is appropriate for the property and surrounding neighborhood. While the project meets the AUD development standards, it is within the Board's purview to determine if it is lacking in certain design elements, such as landscaping, open space, circulation, parking location/configuration, etc.
2. Building Height: The project is proposed to be four stories and approximately 58 feet tall. The immediate adjacent properties are developed with a one-story 21'-6" tall commercial building and Plaza Vera Cruz Park. The ABR should consider the Planning Commission findings for Community Benefit Project which include the following (SBMC 28.69.050.B):
 - a. Demonstrated Need. The applicant has adequately demonstrated a need for the project to exceed 45 feet in building height that is related to the project's benefit to the community, or due to site constraints, or in order to achieve desired architectural qualities;
 - b. Architecture and Design. The project will be exemplary in its design;
 - c. Livability. If the project includes residential units, the project will provide amenities to its residents which ensure the livability of the project with particular attention to good interior design features such as the amount of light and air, or ceiling plate heights;
 - d. Sensitivity to Context. The project design will complement the setting and the character of the neighboring properties with sensitivity to any adjacent federal, state, and City Landmarks or any nearby designated Historic Resources, including City-designated Structures of Merit.

Attachments:

1. Applicant letter regarding Planning Commission Community Benefit Findings, dated January 27, 2016



LETTER

January 27, 2016

Jaime Limon
Senior Planner - Design Review Supervisor
City of Santa Barbara
630 Garden Street PO Box 1990
Santa Barbara, CA 93102

Subject: 15007.00
116 e cota
Planning Commision Community Benefit Findings for Building Height

Via: Email

To Whom it May Concern,

The AUD Rental Housing Project as referenced above is located at 116 E. Cota Street within the downtown CBD. The project is located in the C-M zone and the height limit in the Zoning Ordinance is 45 feet for projects that are not considered a "Community Benefit Project" or a "Community Benefit Housing Project." Section 28.69.050 B of the SBMC States:

28.69.050 Building Height.

B. Community Benefit Projects. *Notwithstanding the maximum building height specified in subsection A above, no building constructed in this zone after the effective date of the ordinance enacting this Chapter shall exceed a height of forty five feet (45') unless the project qualifies as a Community Benefit Project or a Community Benefit Housing Project, and the Planning Commission expressly makes all of the following findings:*

Based on this Code Section and the fact that our project is an AUD project, we believe that it rightly falls under the designation of a "Community Benefit Housing Project" per above and we are seeking Planning Commission findings of Community Benefit for additional building height beyond the base 45' Residential height limit. The findings that are required for the Planning Commission are as follows [Per Section 28.69.050 B of SBMC] with our responses addressing each of the (4) findings:

1. Demonstrated Need. *The applicant has adequately demonstrated a need for the project to exceed 45 feet in building height that is related to the project's benefit to the community, or due to site constraints, or in order to achieve desired architectural qualities;*

- The project is to be developed in full compliance with the City's Average Unit-Size Density program which provides rental units rather than for-sale units while also providing more dwelling units at smaller,

more efficient sizes. We believe that this housing typology is a benefit to the community and is much needed as Student Housing levels are low, vacancy rates for rental market units are under 1% City wide and the proximity to downtown makes it desirable for many demographics looking to live/work downtown.

- The project utilizes Method B of the Outdoor Living Space requirements allowing for 15% common outdoor living space to be relegated to the building's Roof Level. The additional height allows for guardrail height parapet walls as well as vertical circulation components necessary for access and safety.
- The average unit size for this project is 827 SF. All are compact 2-bedroom, 2- bathroom units which further supports the concepts of density and efficiency. The additional height allows us to have higher ceilings, thus providing a more livable unit volume and access to run ducting and other elements necessary for the project.

2. Architecture Design. *The project will be exemplary in its design;*

- The increased height will allow for more open feeling living spaces and contribute to greater natural daylight, ventilation and circulation.
- The design has pulled away from the property lines in many areas. This is critical to obtaining a higher level of daylighting, increased access to prevailing ventilation and open areas to exist in and around the units so as to not push the building envelope to its extremities.
- It also allows for exterior balconies and exterior passageways so that we can reduce the mass, bulk and scale of the structure, creating a more light touch as the units break down in scale toward the property lines.

3. Livability. *If the project includes residential units, the project will provide amenities to its residents which ensure the livability of the project with particular attention to good interior design features such as the amount of light and air, or ceiling plate heights;*

- Based on the AUD requirements, the units are confined to significantly smaller area footprints. Allowing for increased ceiling heights creates a more livable unit for the end user.
- Again, natural daylighting and passive ventilation can be maximized due to added glazing heights, upper venting opportunities, etc. The potential for clerestories also positively adds to the interior space and allows for multiple ceiling heights.
- The spacious Roof Deck allows for the incorporation of "Livable and Farmable Gardens" by way of providing raised planting beds for all tenants. This positively contributes to a feeling of community and promotes many environmental initiatives.

4. Sensitivity to Context. *The project design will complement the setting and the character of the neighboring properties with sensitivity to any adjacent federal, state, and City Landmarks or any nearby designated Historic Resources, including City-designated Structures of Merit.*

- As this Property is within the C-M Zone, all abutting parcels developed with a Commercial use to the East, West and South could achieve a building height of 60' if found to be a Community Benefit Project.
- Currently, there are no Residential projects abutting this property and it sits among many commercial/industrial properties within the immediate neighborhood.
- In close proximity, there are multiple buildings with heights in excess of 45'. These structures include Antioch University (directly across the street) and The Lyon's Building (Caddy Corner).
- The project site is located one and one-half blocks from State Street in the midst of downtown's Central Business District making it an ideal location for high density rental housing with walkable access to downtown amenities.
- The projects' proximity to the adjacent park affords ample light and ventilation and an opportunity for the tenants to use the park and view it from the units in addition to creating a spatial buffer to the

surrounding residential portion of the neighborhood.

It is our feeling that this project addresses the City's current overwhelming need for efficient, high density rental housing. With our project's utilization of the AUD Program, our clients have willingly accepted the provision that ensures the property be used as *renta*/housing indefinitely. Please consider the beneficial nature of these factors when assessing the merits of this project at 116 East Cota Street.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clay Aurell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Clay Aurell, AIA, LEED AP
Principal Architect