



City of Santa Barbara California

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

REPORT DATE: November 10, 2005
AGENDA DATE: November 17, 2005
PROJECT ADDRESS: 110-116 East Cota Street (MST2003-00520)
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Planning Division, (805) 564-5470
Jan Hubbell, AICP, Senior Planner
Steve Foley, Associate Planner

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project involves the construction of a three- and four-story mixed-use development on two parcels, totaling 10,865 square feet, currently used as a bus parking yard. The project includes five residential condominium units, ranging in size from 1,840 to 2,565 square feet, and two commercial spaces totaling 1,824 square feet. Twelve parking spaces are proposed in a partially subterranean parking garage, accessed from Cota Street. Of the six residential units, five would be one-bedroom units, and one would be a studio unit. Please refer to Exhibits B and C, Site Plan and Applicant Letter, for additional project details.

II. REQUIRED APPLICATIONS

The discretionary applications required for this project are:

1. Modification to allow the required 10% open space area to be located on the second level of the development (SBMC §28.21.080.6);
2. Development Plan to allow the construction of 1,824 square feet of nonresidential development (SBMC §28.87.300); and
3. Tentative Subdivision Map for a one-lot subdivision to create five residential and three commercial condominium units (SBMC§27.07 and 27.13).

III. RECOMMENDATION

With the approval of the requested Modification, the proposed project conforms to the City's Zoning and Building Ordinances and policies of the General Plan. In addition, the size and massing of the project are consistent with the surrounding neighborhood. Given that the City is generally built out, and the opportunity for increased residential development is minimal, this is a good opportunity to provide additional housing units in the City's downtown area. Therefore, Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve the project, making the findings outlined in Section IX of this report, and subject to the conditions of approval in Exhibit A.

DATE APPLICATION ACCEPTED: October 19, 2005
DATE ACTION REQUIRED PER MAP ACT: January 9, 2006

Vicinity Map



IV. BACKGROUND

The site received Planning Commission approval for a very similar project on June, 10 2004. The applicant has modified the proposal by decreasing the number of residential units from 6 to 5, while increasing the total square footage dedicated to residential use from 9,720 square feet to 10,409 square feet. This change incorporates individual elevator access to the units. The space for the elevators and equipment necessitated the design changes. The project's proposed commercial component space decreased by 2,061 square feet to a new total of 1,824 square feet. The commercial area continues to be provided in 3 office units. No revision to the approved landscape plan is proposed.

V. SITE INFORMATION AND PROJECT STATISTICS

SITE INFORMATION

Applicant: Tom Meaney	Property Owner: Assem Demachkie & Tim McCormick
Parcel Numbers: 031-201-003, -030	Lot Area: 10,865 square feet
General Plan: Offices and Major Public & Institutional	Zoning: C-M (Commercial Manufacturing)
Existing Use: Vacant, Bus Parking	Topography: Nearly flat
Adjacent Land Uses: North – Commercial, Residential East – Public Park (Plaza de Vera Cruz) South – Commercial West – Commercial	

PROJECT STATISTICS

	Bedrooms	Size (Net)	Parking	Private Outdoor Living Space
Unit 1	2	2,190 sq. ft.	1-car garage	74 sq. ft. +
Unit 2	1	1,840 sq. ft.	1-car garage	87 sq. ft. +
Unit 3	2	1,990 sq. ft.	1-car garage	90 sq. ft. +
Unit 4	2	2,565 sq. ft.	1-car garage	319 sq. ft. +
Unit 5	1	1,975 sq. ft.	1-car garage	504 sq. ft. +

VI. ZONING ORDINANCE CONSISTENCY

Standard	Requirement/Allowance	Existing	Proposed
Lot Area Required for Each Unit (Variable Density)	1-Bdrm = 1,840 sq. ft. 2-Bdrm = 2,320 sq. ft. (2) 1,840 = 3,680 sq. ft. (3) 2,320 = 6,960 sq. ft. Total = 10,640 sq. ft.	6,255 square feet + 4,610 square feet 10,865 square feet	10,865 square feet
Setbacks -Front -Interior -Rear	None None None	N/A N/A N/A	3 feet 0 to 3 feet 0 feet
Building Height	60 feet (4 stories)	N/A	60 feet (62 feet with the allowed architectural projection, 4 stories)
Parking	Residential - 5 spaces Commercial – 2 spaces	N/A N/A	6 spaces 6 spaces
Common Open Yard	15% of the lot (1,086.5 sq. ft.)	N/A	28.5% (3,100 sq. ft.)
Private Outdoor Living Space	N/A if satisfied by Common Open Yard	N/A	74 sq. ft. to 504 sq. ft.

Standard	Requirement/Allowance	Existing	Proposed
Lot Coverage			
-Building	N/A	0 sq. ft. 0%	7,545 sq. ft. (84.7%)
-Paving/Driveway	N/A	10,865 sq. ft. 100%	455 sq. ft. (2.6%)
-Landscaping	N/A	0 sq. ft. 0%	2,193 sq. ft. (12.7%)
		10,865 sq. ft. (100%)	17,250 sq. ft. (100%)

The proposed project would meet the requirements of the C-M Zone, with the exception of the requested Modification to provide the required 10% open space area on the second floor, rather than at the ground level. As the entire project is built above the parking garage, there is limited opportunity to provide significant open space area on the ground level. Therefore, the applicant is proposing to provide a large portion of the required open yard area in the interior paseo, on the second level. Because this project is a mixed-use development located in the downtown, Staff believes providing open yard area on the second level is appropriate.

A. PARKING

The property is located within the Central Business District, which has a requirement of one parking space per 500 square feet of nonresidential square footage. The residential parking requirement is one uncovered space per residential unit, with no guest parking requirement. As such, the Zoning Ordinance would require that four parking spaces be provided for the proposed 1,824 square feet of commercial/office use (1,824/500 = 3.6 spaces) and five spaces are required for the five residential units. However, the site is located in a 50% parking zone-of-benefit due to the proximity of the Lot #10 parking lot, which allows the commercial parking requirement to be reduced by half. As such, two commercial and five residential parking spaces are required, for a total of seven parking spaces. The project includes 12 parking spaces and, therefore, would meet the Zoning Ordinance requirement.

B. RESIDENTIAL CONDOMINIUM DEVELOPMENT

The project would be consistent with the general City requirements and physical standards for new condominium development, per SBMC §27.13.050 and §27.13.060, respectively. The project would provide the required covered parking, 300 cubic feet of private storage space and laundry facilities for each unit. Each unit would have its own utility meters, and all utilities are proposed to be underground. Each unit would also meet the requirements for private outdoor living space.

C. MEASURE E

The project includes the construction of approximately 1,824 square feet of commercial/office space, which requires the approval of a Development Plan. Pursuant to the provisions of SBMC §28.87.300, the project site is provided with 2,716 square feet of Measure E nonresidential square footage from the Vacant Property category (10,865 sq. ft. x 25%). This proposal would utilize 1,824 of the 2,716 square feet.

VII. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Guidelines of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) include a number of types of projects that are generally exempt from environmental review. Staff and the

Environmental Analyst have determined that the project qualifies for an exemption per CEQA Section 15304 which provides for minor alterations to land including grading on land with a slope of less than 10%, and Section 15332 which provides for in-fill development projects in urban areas where it is determined that there will be no significant effects as identified by the following criteria:

1. **The project is consistent with the applicable General Plan designation and all applicable General Plan policies as well as with applicable zoning designation regulations.**

The General Plan designation for this area is Office and Major Public & Institutional. There are several General Plan policies as well as zoning regulations that apply to the project. These are discussed under the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance Consistency sections of this report. Planning Staff's conclusion is that the project is consistent with the General Plan Land Use Designation, Zoning designation, and applicable policies and regulations.

2. **The proposed development occurs within city limits on a project of no more than five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses**

The combined lot size of the entire project is 10,865 square feet (0.25 acre). The area is urban and developed with a mix of commercial, office, and industrial uses, and the site is surrounded by urban uses in all directions.

3. **The project site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species.**

The site has been previously disturbed and has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species.

4. **Approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality.**

- a. **Traffic**

Transportation planning staff conducted a trip generation analysis of the proposed project based on data found in the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) and Trip Generation and Parking Generation manuals. It is estimated that the proposed project would generate approximately nine (9) AM peak hour trips, nine (9) PM peak hour trips, and 80 average daily trips.

The City's threshold for following trips in any direction to or from a site is five trips. Once less than five trips are determined to be headed in any one direction, distribution (or "following") of these trips ceases because Staff cannot state with statistical certainty where these trips would be headed on a daily basis. When the vehicle trips generated by this project are distributed to the adjacent street network, it is not expected to exceed the City's standard threshold that would result in traffic impacts to the nearby intersections. Thus, the Transportation Division anticipates that this project would not generate project-specific or cumulative traffic impacts.

b. Noise

According to the City's Master Environmental Assessment (MEA), the project site is located in the less than 60 dBA (decibels) noise corridor. The City Noise Element standard of 60 dBA Ldn (day-night level) for residential development would therefore be satisfied and potential noise impacts to the development are expected to be less than significant.

c. Air Quality

For environmental review purposes, the City of Santa Barbara uses the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District's (APCD) thresholds of significance for air quality impacts. Based on the APCD's Land Use Screening Table, a project of five residential units and three commercial/office spaces would not result in significant air quality impacts from ozone precursors due to mobile emissions. Due to the fact that the project is much smaller than those indicated on the table, it is expected there would be less than significant air quality impacts from mobile source emissions.

The project will involve grading, paving and landscaping activities which could result in short term dust related impacts; however, the applicant would be required to incorporate standard dust control mitigation measures during grading and construction activities. These measures are included as Conditions of Approval E.7, 8, and 9.

d. Water Quality

The proposed project would not be expected to cause significant impacts to water quality. The existing site is completely covered by paving and runoff currently sheet flows toward the southeastern corner of the property. The proposed project would provide some landscaped areas to capture surface runoff, and all runoff collected in the parking garage would be treated in pollution interceptor devices. Runoff from rooftops and hardscaped areas would be collected and directed to Cota Street.

e. The site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services.

All utilities are existing and available at the site and can be extended to the development. The proposed project would result in an insignificant demand for public services, including police, fire protection, electrical power, natural gas and water distribution and treatment.

5. The site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services.

All utilities are existing and available at the site and can be extended to the development. The proposed project would result in an insignificant increase in demand for public services, including police, fire protection, electrical power, natural gas and water distribution and treatment.

VIII. ISSUES

A. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The project was reviewed in concept by the Planning Commission on August 11, 2005. The majority of the Commissioners indicated overall support of the project and the change in the number and mix of residential unit types.

B. DESIGN REVIEW

The project is similar in mass, bulk, scale and is essentially the same architectural design as that previously reviewed by the ABR. The foremost structural and design difference is due to the tower component changes, where originally the 2nd through 4th floors were dedicated to office uses and now are proposed to be residential. This use and design change led to the incorporation of a tower roof terrace with an allowable architectural projection over the terrace stair landing. Upon review of these changes, staff determined that the project substantially conformed to the design previously reviewed by the PC and ABR. Staff did not feel that additional ABR review was necessary prior to the review by the Planning Commission.

The previous project was reviewed by the ABR on two separate occasions. On August 4, 2003, the Board asked the applicant to lower the plate heights to reduce the apparent mass of the building, provide more open space and lower the scale in some areas to allow light and air into the plaza, and provide substantial landscaping pockets facing the park and Cota Street.

On August 18, 2003, the ABR forwarded the project to the Planning Commission and felt that the direction of the architectural style was acceptable. The Board was generally comfortable with the mass, bulk and scale of the project, but stated that more effort needed to be made to vary the plate heights of the third story elements to significantly reduce the apparent mass and repetition of the building. The ABR also asked that some reductions and penetrations of the mass on the east elevation be made to reduce the scale of the building and allow light and air into the interior spaces. Finally, the Board stated that they were comfortable with the massing of the office building due to its internal location on the property and the architect's desire to give it a non-residential feel.

B. COMPLIANCE WITH THE GENERAL PLAN

Before a condominium project and a tentative map can be approved, they must be found consistent with the City's General Plan. The project site is located in the West Downtown neighborhood, which is more intensely used than other parts of the City, and high-density residential and commercial development is envisioned in this area.

1. Land Use Element

The General Plan designation for this property is Office and Major Public & Institutional; residential uses are also allowed in areas so designated. As such, the residential portion of the mixed-use development would be subject to the density requirements of the R-3/R-4 (Multiple Family Residential) Zone, which allows 12 dwelling units to the acre. The Land Use Element of the General Plan recognizes,

however, that in zones where variable density standards apply, development may exceed the limit of twelve units per acre. With the application of variable density standards (discussed above, in the Zoning Ordinance Consistency section of this report), the proposed condominium development would result in a density of approximately 20 dwelling units per acre. The project would be consistent with the General Plan in this regard.

2. Housing Element

The City Housing Element encourages construction of a wide range of housing types to meet the needs of various household types. This proposal would satisfy that goal through the mix of unit types proposed.

A goal of the Housing Element is to assist in the production of new housing opportunities, through the public and private sector, which vary sufficiently in type and affordability to meet the needs of all economic and social groups. Additionally, Santa Barbara has very little vacant or available land for new infill residential development, and, therefore, the City has supported buildout of housing units in the City's urban areas where individual projects are deemed appropriate and compatible. The provision of two one-bedroom units and three two-bedroom units, ranging from 1,840 to 2,565 square feet in size, would provide some variability in the additional housing stock being provided by this project.

Neighborhood Compatibility

In accordance with Housing Element Policy 3.3, which requires new development to be compatible with the prevailing character of the neighborhood, the proposed building would be compatible in scale, size and design with the surrounding neighborhood.

One of the goals of the Urban Design Guidelines is compatibility of new development with the character of the City, the surrounding neighborhood, and adjacent properties. The Architectural Board of Review (ABR) considers the Urban Design Guidelines in reviewing development proposals. As discussed above, the ABR was generally supportive of the mass, bulk, and scale of the previous proposal, and while some project details still need studying as part of subsequent design review, they are supportive of the development of this project in this neighborhood.

The surrounding neighborhood is comprised of a mix of office, residential, commercial, and industrial buildings, which range from one to five stories in height. Directly adjacent to the project site are one- and two-story commercial buildings to the west and south, a three-story commercial/office/residential building to the north, and a public park to the east. The height of the proposed structure would range from 26 to 60 feet (62 feet with the allowed 2 foot architectural projection) above existing grade, which is comparable with other three-story structures in the surrounding neighborhood. Additionally, the building is in keeping with the architectural style of surrounding buildings and the fourth story makes up a small portion of the building and is set back from the adjacent streets. Thus, the project can be found consistent with the type and

massing of surrounding development in the neighborhood.

3. **Circulation Element**

The Circulation Element contains goals and policies that promote housing in and adjacent to the downtown to facilitate the use of alternative modes of transportation and to reduce the use of the automobile. For example, Circulation Element Implementation Strategy 13.1.1 encourages “the development of projects that combine and locate residential uses near areas of employment and services.” This project provides housing as well as commercial space in the downtown and is, therefore, consistent with this goal.

4. **Conservation Element**

Cultural and Historic Resources Policy 1.0 serves to protect archaeological, historic, or architectural resources. The project site is located within four sensitivity zones for archaeological resources. A Phase I Archaeological Study was prepared by Stone Archaeological Consulting in November 2003. The study stated that due to the lack of ground visibility during the site survey and the potential for encountering historic deposits (related to two residences and accessory structures that previously existed on the site) during grading, an intensive Phase 1 archaeological survey is recommended after the existing pavement is removed. If prehistoric or historic cultural remains are identified during the Phase 1 Survey, an Extended Phase 1 investigation should be performed, as stated in the report. If remains are found and appear to be potentially significant, a Phase 2 significance assessment should be performed to determine any further treatment. The report also recommends that, even if no cultural remains are identified on the surface during the inspection, ground disturbance in the area in the vicinity of the previous outhouse location should be monitored by a City-qualified archaeologist to a depth of three feet (3') below grade. Staff has included these recommendations as a condition of approval for the project (Condition D.1) and, therefore, the project can be found consistent with Cultural and Historic Resources Policy 1.0.

IX. FINDINGS

City Staff is supportive of the proposed project and requested modification. The density of the proposed development complies with that allowed by the Zoning Ordinance and the General Plan, and is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. The project is expected to be an attractive development and would provide for additional residential units in the City's housing stock. In addition, the project complies with applicable General Plan policies regarding cultural resources, housing, circulation, and noise. Therefore, Staff recommends that the Planning Commission make the findings outlined below, and approve the project subject to the Conditions of Approval in Exhibit A.

A. OPEN YARD AREA MODIFICATION (SBMC §28.92.026)

The Modification is consistent with the purposes and intent of the Zoning Ordinance and is necessary to secure an appropriate improvement on a lot, prevent unreasonable hardship, or promote uniformity of improvement. The proposed project would provide adequate open space area to meet the Zoning Ordinance requirement (at least 10% of the total lot area); however,

because it is being provided on the second floor instead of the ground level, a Modification is required. The requested Modification is consistent with the purpose and intent of the Zoning Ordinance to provide open space areas in new development, and it is necessary to secure an appropriate improvement on a lot. Providing the open space area on the second floor is appropriate in urbanized areas, especially in the downtown core.

B. DEVELOPMENT PLAN APPROVAL (SBMC §28.87.300)

1. The proposed development complies with all provisions of the Zoning Ordinance, can be found consistent with the purpose and intent of the Ordinance and the proposed project is an appropriate use for the neighborhood; and
2. The proposed development is consistent with the principles of sound community planning. The proposed mixed-use project would allow for additional residential units and commercial spaces in the Downtown area, and is consistent with the existing mix of uses in the surrounding neighborhood; and
3. The proposed development will not have a significant adverse impact upon the neighborhood's aesthetics/character in that the size, bulk or scale of the development will be compatible with the neighborhood; and
4. The proposed development will not have a significant unmitigated adverse impact upon City and South Coast affordable housing stock since the proposal involves the addition of five residential units in the City's housing stock; and
5. The proposed development will not have a significant unmitigated adverse impact on the City's water resources because the City currently has a sufficient dependable water supply to serve this project; and
6. The proposed development will not have a significant unmitigated adverse impact on the City's traffic because the proposed use will meet its parking demand for the site and vehicle trips associated with the use will not significantly impact the City's street network.

C. TENTATIVE MAP (SBMC §27.07.100)

The Tentative Subdivision Map is consistent with the General Plan and the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Santa Barbara. The site is physically suitable for the proposed development, the project is consistent with the variable density provisions of the Municipal Code and the General Plan, and the proposed use is consistent with the Land Use Element and zoning designation for the site, and the vision for this neighborhood in the General Plan. The design of the project will not cause substantial environmental damage, and associated improvements will not cause serious public health problems or conflict with easements, acquired by the public at large, for access through or use of property within the proposed development.

D. NEW CONDOMINIUM DEVELOPMENT (SBMC §27.13.080)

1. *The project complies with all provisions of the City's Condominium Ordinance.*

The project complies with the density requirements and each unit includes adequate

covered parking with storage, laundry facilities, separate utility metering, adequate unit size and required private outdoor living space.

2. *The proposed development is consistent with the General Plan of the City of Santa Barbara.*

The project is consistent with policies of the City's General Plan including the Land Use Element, Housing Element, Conservation Element, Noise Element and Circulation Element. The proposed development is consistent with the principles of sound community planning and will not have an adverse impact upon the neighborhood's aesthetics, parks, streets, traffic, parking and other community facilities and resources. The project will provide infill residential development in the downtown that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

3. *The proposed development is consistent with the principles of sound community planning and will not have an adverse impact upon the neighborhood's aesthetics, parks, streets, traffic, parking and other community facilities and resources.*

The project is an infill mixed-use project proposed in an area where residential and commercial uses are permitted. The project is adequately served by public streets, will provide adequate parking to meet the demands of the project and will not result in traffic impacts. Adequate park facilities exist nearby, and the project would not adversely impact other community resources, such as water, sewer, police, fire, and schools. The design has been reviewed by the City's design review board, which found the architecture and site design appropriate.

Exhibits:

- A. Conditions of Approval
- B. Site Plan
- C. Applicant's letter dated August 26, 2005
- D. ABR Minutes