

MINUTES APPROVED AT THE DRB MEETING ON APRIL 14, 2021

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD REGULAR MEETING Richmond, CA 94804

March 10, 2021
6:00 P.M.

All Participation Via Teleconference

Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Contra Costa County and Governor Gavin Newsom had issued multiple orders requiring sheltering in place, social distancing, and reduction of person-to-person contact. Accordingly, Governor Newsom had issued executive orders that allowed cities to hold public meetings via teleconferencing. Due to the shelter in place orders, all City of Richmond staff, members of the Design Review Board (DRB), and members of the public participated via teleconference. Public comment was confined to items on the agenda and limited to the specific methods identified on the agenda.

BOARD MEMBERS

Kimberly Butt
Jessica Fine
Macy Leung

Brian Carter
Michelle Hook
Jonathan Livingston

Chair Livingston called the regular meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Jonathan Livingston, and Boardmembers Kimberly Butt, Brian Carter, Jessica Fine, and Macy Leung

Absent: Boardmember Michelle Hook

INTRODUCTIONS

Staff Present: Planners Emily Carroll and Hector Lopez, and City Attorney Shannon Moore

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: February 24, 2021

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| <p>ACTION: It was M/S/C (Fine/Carter) to approve the minutes of the February 24, 2021 meeting, as submitted; approved by voice vote: 5-0 (Ayes: Butt, Carter, Fine, Leung, and Livingston; Noes: None; Abstain: None; Absent: Hook).</p> |
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APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Public Forum

At the request of the DRB, Emily Carroll read the following email from CORDELL HINDLER into the record: *Good evening Chair Livingston, Boardmembers and staff, I have a couple of comments for the record. 1. Any time potential projects coming before any appointed body they must communicate with the neighborhood council first hand. 2. Just a heads up, the term limits are approaching for the Boardmembers. Sincerely, Cordell.*

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Ms. Carroll described the format of the web-based meeting and the public's ability to speak during the meeting.

City Council Liaison Report: None

CONSENT CALENDAR: None

APPEAL DATE:

Chair Livingston announced that any decision approved may be appealed in writing to the City Clerk within ten (10) days, or by Monday, March 22, 2021 by 5:00 P.M. and he announced it after each affected item.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

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| 1. PLN21-021 | NEW COMMERCIAL BUILDING |
| Description | PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER A REQUEST FOR A DESIGN REVIEW PERMIT TO CONSTRUCT A 5,000 SQUARE FOOT PREFABRICATED BUILDING ON A VACANT PARCEL. |
| Location | 600 SOUTH 31 ST STREET |
| APN | 549-204-002 |
| Zoning | IL, INDUSTRIAL LIGHT DISTRICT |
| Owner | JOHNNY DA SILVA |
| Applicant | NORMA MUNOZ |
| Staff Contact | JONELYN WHALES Recommendation: CONTINUE TO FUTURE MEETING |

The item was continued to a future meeting.

An e-mail from MANOOCH KHAJEH, the next door neighbor asking for information on the project, was submitted to staff and made a part of the public record.

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| 2. PLN21-023 | SUPPORTIVE AND FAMILY APARTMENTS |
| Description | STUDY SESSION TO PROVIDE AND RECEIVE COMMENTS ON THE DESIGN OF A NEW 5-STORY BUILDING AND REHABILITATION OF AN EXISTING BUILDING FOR A TOTAL OF 131 RESIDENTIAL UNITS. THE PROJECT WOULD INVOLVE A REQUEST FOR A GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT AND REZONING FROM PCI (PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND INSTITUTIONAL) TO CM-3 (COMMERCIAL MIXED-USE), AND A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR CONCESSIONS AND INCENTIVES UNDER THE STATE DENSITY BONUS LAW. |
| Location | 100 37 TH STREET |
| APN | 517-340-004 |
| Zoning | PCI (PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND INSTITUTIONAL) DISTRICT |
| Owner | CONTRA COSTA COUNTY |
| Applicant | EDEN HOUSING, INC. |
| Staff Contact | HECTOR LOPEZ Recommendation: PROVIDE AND RECEIVE COMMENTS |

Hector Lopez presented the staff report dated March 10, 2021 for a new residential development from Eden Housing, Inc. that would construct a five-story building and rehabilitate an existing building on a developed parcel of approximately 2.84 acres located on Bissell

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Avenue between the Richmond BART line and Macdonald Avenue in an area of mixed public, commercial, and residential uses.

The existing building was a two-story structure over a basement located along the western side of the property with surface parking located along the east side of the property, which had recently housed the West County Health Center. The Contra Costa County Superior Courthouse was adjacent to the west of the project site, and to the east a single-story commercial building which was currently a paper shredding business. Ryse Youth Center and its new facility currently under construction were located northeast of the project site.

Mr. Lopez stated the proposed five-story building (Building B) was approximately 92,000 square feet and would include a total of 72 affordable residential units. The structure would be located along the eastern side of the property. The ground level would include approximately 8,500 square feet of county office and 1,500 square feet of Micro-Enterprise Retail. The existing building (Building A), two stories over a basement, would be renovated to include 59 new support housing units. The overall design included a vehicular access from Bissell Avenue to the rear of the site between the two buildings and the parking area was located in the rear of the site.

The project would require a General Plan Amendment, Rezoning, and a Conditional Use Permit for concessions and incentives under the State Density Bonus Law. The concessions the applicant requested had to do with building height, parking lot reduction, and open space reduction. The decision of the DRB would be in the form of a recommendation to the Planning Commission with respect to the design.

Mr. Lopez stated that some of the issues had to do with the design and the location of the open space. Staff had advised the applicant that the location of the open space would not work well and the applicant had been encouraged to provide open space on the roof or other areas. A connection between the two buildings had also been recommended.

Mr. Lopez responded to comments from the DRB and explained that the applicant would have to comply with minimum bicycle parking requirements. He also clarified that when affordable units were proposed the city had to allow a density bonus. In this case, the applicant had not requested a density bonus but had requested concessions, acceptable under the law.

MATT SCHREIBER, Eden Housing, Inc., introduced the project team and stated the project was being co-developed with the Community Housing Development Corporation (CHDC) of North Richmond. He reported that both Eden Housing and the CHDC were non-profits closely aligned to provide access to high-quality affordable housing and Eden Housing was committed to the long-term ownership, operation and service provisions at their properties. This would be the fifth co-development with CHDC in Richmond. He presented the goals and vision for the project with 59 units for formerly homeless residents and 72 family units in a new ground up building for a total of 131 new affordable housing units that had been proposed with a deeply subsidized deep income targeting project for the two buildings.

Mr. Schreiber stated not only housing but enhanced services would be provided. While a micro-enterprise café had initially been proposed in Building A, there would now be 10,000 square feet of YMCA space, which would be provided free to local residents. He reported they had engaged with the neighborhood and had worked with the City and the neighboring uses to ensure appropriate coordination. He identified the network of open space with 53,000 square feet of on- and off-site open space which would renovate the courtyard plaza, the Bissell Avenue frontage and the new frontage in front of the new building, and include a public art component.

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With respect to funding, Eden Housing was pursuing Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) funding and the Next EPIC Challenge: Reimagining Affordable Mixed-Use Development in a Carbon-Constrained Future, with the intent for a carbon neutral building. WILLIAM DUNCANSON, BAR Architecture, highlighted the site plan, which he stated was part of the courthouse campus. When asked, he clarified the different housing types for Building A and Building B and stated that Building A was the former Health Clinic and the new program would provide supportive housing with studios and one-bedrooms, mostly single occupants for those who were formerly homeless. Building B would provide a fundamentally different program and serve a different population with a minimum of 25 percent two bedrooms and 25 percent three bedrooms geared towards families. The balance would be one-bedrooms and a couple of studios serving different populations.

Chair Livingston asked why the entrances to each building had been separated, and Mr. Duncanson stated that one of the primary reasons for having both entrances facing west with different public ways was to activate the courthouse plaza with a front entry and activity. The same intent was to allow Building B to have more activity and to keep an eye on that street from residents entering from the surface parking lot in the rear of the site.

Mr. Duncanson stated that both buildings had some outdoor open space that would be commonly usable private open space to those buildings, and in both cases the open space was contiguous with in-building services. The project proposed to improve a significant amount of open space beyond the property line not captured in any open space calculations but in aggregate create an amenity for the public, courthouse patrons, and future residents.

Mr. Duncanson presented the elevations and explained how the adaptive reuse building design would be made more pedestrian and residential in scale, with a color palette to tie in with the integral color palette of the courthouse. The new five-story construction would also be tied into one campus with cohesive architecture.

BRUCE JETT, JETT Landscape Architecture + Design, described how he had used the symbolism from the courthouse (justice) and housing (equity) to create the landscape design for the public open spaces and plazas encompassing the diversity of the community. He described the individual spaces and how they would be landscaped to enhance and support the architecture of the building and provide public areas for gathering. He stated the public art that had been envisioned would be interactive to engage the community and create unique spaces symbolic of equity and justice. He reported that 19 bicycle parking spaces (1:1) would be provided and there would be a tot lot and other play equipment in the back of Building B.

In response to the Chair as to what had been proposed on the east side of the property behind Building B, Mr. Jett stated that area would be part of the Early Child Learning area where children would play, and Mr. Schreiber stated that part of that area was for loading and that area did not count as open space.

With respect to the interior courtyard, Mr. Jett stated it would be a semi-private gathering area for the residents and a place where caseworkers could meet with residents. He also noted, when asked, that the café that would move into the Bissell Avenue Plaza was currently shown closer to the parking lot and would be moved forward to Bissell Plaza so that it could be accessed from the street.

Chair Livingston suggested that would take away from the open space, although Mr. Jett suggested it would activate the open space and would become a part of the open space, to serve all of the residents in both of the buildings, the courthouse, and the public.

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Mr. Schreiber clarified with respect to bike parking that the Affording Housing and Sustainability Communities funding source had strict requirements on bike parking and a robust bike offering would be provided in both of the buildings.

Chair Livingston opened public comments at this time.

Emily Carroll again described the format of the web-based meeting and the public's ability to speak during the meeting.

MICHAEL, Richmond, stated he owned the building at 3900 Macdonald Avenue. He supported the project but had concerns for parking and the parking concession along with the traffic flow. He had not been contacted by the applicant and expressed a desire to talk to someone about the project because he operated a store that catered to families on the WIC program. Given that the store had a large parking lot, he was concerned with overflow parking issues and looked forward to having a conversation with the developer.

There were no other speakers.

Vice Chair Carter asked for details on how residents would enter and exit their units from the parking lot and circulate throughout the site, and Mr. Duncanson stated the parking lot was dedicated to the family building (Building B). He described how residents would navigate the site and the adjacent area by person, by vehicle, ride share, bicycle, and on foot. He also described the access points for Building A as well and pointed out that there would be bike parking in the basement of that building.

In response to Vice Chair Carter's concern about the relationship of the supportive housing to the courthouse, Mr. Schreiber recognized at this stage the supportive housing should be incorporated into the design to recognize that there were residents who might be impacted by being adjacent to a courthouse. He emphasized the project was a housing development.

Mr. Jett stated the design would not be the typical courthouse plaza and did not have the typical symbols of courthouses and was open to an expression of other things about the community itself, about equity and justice. He explained there were different routes of travel and there was an attempt to find the balance with a visual separation coming in and out so that in the end the project would be welcoming to the people and not just be a peer expression of courthouses.

Vice Chair Carter suggested that the underutilized space at the courthouse should be utilized to provide some relief and create a place for people in Building A to hang out. He asked if there had been consideration of placing the entry to Building A across from Building B so that the "front door" of Building A would be on a residential street. He suggested the relationship to the courthouse plaza could be through an atrium or double height space or something that made a visual connection to extend the spine through, and he asked if there could be mirror entrances for Building A and Building B, to which Mr. Duncanson reiterated that the entries had been intended to put access on the plaza to activate that area and to create more front yards.

Vice Chair Carter verified that the courthouse plaza would be illuminated all night. He asked if there could be an entrance on the street between Buildings A and B to offer a more residential feel. He suggested that if the residents of Building A were transitioning there should be a normal feel as much as possible without being treated differently from the neighboring building that had a more residential entrance. He strongly encouraged a revisit of that area.

Vice Chair Carter asked what steps had been taken with landscaping to provide privacy on the

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ground floor units, and Mr. Jett explained that there would be a fair amount of landscaping between Bissell Avenue Plaza and the ground floor units but there was no desire to block light and the right scale and size of planting would have to be considered. The stormwater treatment was also a factor to consider. He added that there was generous landscaping around the building.

In terms of privacy and light, Mr. Schreiber stated that tall windows had been proposed to have obscured glass at seat height to provide privacy inside the units and to provide more relative area for the window with an opportunity to have high/low windows that would offer natural ventilation.

Vice Chair Carter suggested the tot lot had been located in a vulnerable position. With respect to the existing building, he suggested the corners of the ground floor units appeared to be exposed and while he liked the obscured glass, he questioned whether there would be an opportunity to better screen that area. He loved the way the team had embraced what used to be a public building with a shared courtyard with the county courthouse but he suggested everything should be done to uncouple the kind of institutional public feel to a more market level residential feel to better help the transition. Adding wood slat shading elements would help and he wanted to find a way to potentially offer operable casement windows or an area outside for a planter box, which might be possible within the units themselves to give a hint or element of open space. He verified there would be no fence along the Bissell Street side of the property. He sought ways to soften the hard lines and still offer a connection with the courthouse next door.

With respect to the new Building A, Vice Chair Carter referred to the suggestion for a roof deck and while he understood the applicant's response due to the need for mechanical equipment on the roof, he suggested there would be sufficient space to provide a roof deck as a way to provide some private open space.

In response, Mr. Duncanson stated that the roof plan in the Board packet had been considered prior to the decision to go after the California Energy Commission Epic Challenge where net zero buildings had to be delivered. As a result, the entirety of the roof of both buildings would have to be covered to provide on-site energy generation and some photovoltaic (PV) in the parking lots. He added that putting open space on the roof would also have cost impacts as well which was almost moot if all that space was needed for PV.

KASEY ARCHEY, Eden Housing, Inc., stated that operationally a roof deck could become a nightmare for Eden Housing given that they had experienced residents who went to rooftops and jumped off, which was an issue related to rooftop areas. She described the other complications involved which could become a property management nightmare.

Vice Chair Carter recommended some balconies for the three bedroom units on the fourth and fifth floors to address the austere look of the building, although Mr. Schreiber stated that when the building had initially been designed they had similar concerns to the long-term property management issues. He stated that balconies were not typically provided given the same issues related to rooftop decks. He recommended that other alternatives be considered.

Vice Chair Carter was sympathetic to the issues but if there was an opportunity he encouraged the applicant to find some way to offer more private open space to the residents. He stated that the scattering of balconies could increase the value of the property.

Boardmember Butt supported the reutilization of the vacant building, was very supportive of the project and what it was doing and stated it would be a great addition to the area. She suggested the landscape plan was awkward in that every entry faced west, and there was an

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odd relationship between Building A and Building B. She asked if the entry driveway had ever been considered on the eastern edge so that there was no road between the two buildings.

Mr. Duncanson explained that had been evaluated and one reason was that there were a number of utility easements running down 39th Street where there was currently vehicular access and some live utilities which would need to be undone, discovered after the fact. Putting the driveway on the east side placed Building A and Building B in closer proximity to one another, only 20 feet apart when providing a fire apparatus compliance road on the east side. In addition, they would not be able to get the 12 commercial parking spaces on the 39th Street extension if the driveway was on the other side.

Boardmember Butt struggled with the site plan, the leftover space on the east side of the building, the fact that the buildings did not relate to each other, and the fact that the location of some of the entries was hidden. She commented that the glass connector running through the courthouse could go through Building A and all the way through the site creating two entries, which she recommended be studied.

Mr. Duncanson responded to Boardmember Butt as to what was being saved of the existing building, and explained that the superstructure in terms of columns, beams and floors, exterior fins and a portion of the exterior skin of the second floor would be retained but the inside would be completely gutted.

Boardmember Butt stated the building still retained the institutional feel of what should be a residential building. A planter or a personal outdoor space was recommended.

When asked about the materials, Mr. Duncanson stated the solar shade fins would be partially removed and he would play with their orientation so that they were a bit more fun in the way color was expressed. There would be an aluminum window system, new infill between the concrete structure at the ground floor, and the existing porcelain tiles would be repainted white. The palette was simple for Building A with plaster, metal panel, aluminum windows, existing concrete frame and existing tiles refinished with some decorative steelwork at building guard rails. Building B would have the same ochre plaster and some white plaster and two-story banding along with a series of bays slightly articulated and rotated outside the building plane to get the fenestration pointed away from BART to address soundwaves. There would be some passive sound mitigation strategy. The material on Building B was identified as corrugated metal panels with variations in scale of channel appearing similar to a board and batten siding. The building also had vinyl windows in a color to match the adaptive reuse building, a potential art or green wall at the building entry, with storefront metal canopies.

Boardmember Butt suggested that having sufficient outdoor space would continue to be a concern. She emphasized the need to make the site feel more residential, more comfortable, and noted it felt hotel-like. It would be nice to see a place where people could have self-expression, especially given the pandemic. She supported something more residential.

Boardmember Butt appreciated that parts of the existing building would be retained but still urged a more residential feel. When asked about the tot lot, she recommended a thick high wall to protect the children, stated the tot lot did not feel very protected, noted the space felt left over but recognized there was not a lot of space left. She suggested there were less than desirable components where the tot lot had been placed at the street corner and parking lot.

Boardmember Leung commended the much-needed affordable housing project, understood the challenges in terms of balancing programs, operation needs, addressing affording housing

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needs, financing challenges, and site requirements. Given the complicated site and speaking to indoor and outdoor amenity spaces, she stated that Building A had plentiful spaces in the interior courtyard which tied directly to the plaza but supported more amenities inside the interior courtyard beyond the seating that had been proposed such as raised planters, community gardening, or a barbeque. In terms of the privacy issue and the balcony question, she suggested that plantings could be provided around the building so that if windows easily opened and were accessible there could be socialization without accessing the interior of the building.

Boardmember Leung referred to the large windows and asked if there would be a stopper or limiter to prohibit direct access to the units through the windows. She recommended that more amenity spaces be provided inside the courtyard and stated that entry from the courtyard to Building A should also address some privacy issues with screening and access control at the entrance. With respect to the transportation issue and the crisscrossing, with bike path and public parking into the entryway and direct vehicular access to Building A on the parking lot, she suggested there were safety concerns that would need to be addressed, particularly between Building B and Building A. She recommended signage or road mitigation to slow down traffic. The tot lot should also be shielded and made harder to access from the parking lot. She did not support rooftop amenity spaces or balconies for the reasons earlier noted. Speaking to the symbols to recognize the diversity and integrating culture, she wanted to make sure that all diversity was appropriately recognized. She asked about the fencing and supported some type of plant screening for privacy.

With respect to Building B, Boardmember Leung suggested there were few amenity spaces for the building and more was needed wherever it could be provided. With respect to the floor plan she suggested it would be nice to have private indoor/outdoor spaces in the new building. She encouraged more mini spaces and clarified the access points. She highly encouraged the architects to look at the existing building and make it less commercial/industrial and to think critically about operation, usage, and access.

Boardmember Fine spoke to constructability and design and encouraged an evaluation of how all users of the site would get around Richmond and the Bay Area in general; stated that things like outdoor activities were much more encouraged than an indoor gym, for instance; wanted to see connection to the greenway and outdoor activities over outdoor patios and private spaces; and in terms of lighting specs stated that had not been provided in terms of output and requested that information. She wanted to make sure the specs were clear.

With respect to the color palette, Boardmember Fine had no objections to the colors but had read something about a Rosie the Riverter theme and had seen nothing in that regard from the presentation. In terms of design, she concurred with the comments related to entrances to the building and wanted to know the volumetric design relationships between Building A and Building B.

Boardmember Fine noted that Building A had a much more cohesive dialogue with the existing courthouse than Building B and suggested that Building B was almost an afterthought and it was very vertical with striping, fins and windows with strong divisions that did not relate to either Building A or the courthouse. She suggested looking at the way Building A had been panelized compared to Building B and sought a more cohesive design that could resolve the entry circulation issues. She also had questions about the angled walls of Building B from an interior perspective. Speaking to the tot lot, she supported protected spaces and had no problem putting the tot lot closer to the courthouse towards the west.

Chair Livingston questioned with respect to the property maintenance issues related to decks or

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rooftop gardens why projects were designed differently for affordable housing for the poor than for market rate housing. He had a philosophical problem not providing decent livable space for people. With respect to the site plan, he stated one of the things lacking was usable open space or space for those who would live in the buildings. He did not know why Bissell Avenue Plaza was being paved with a civic institutional plaza when there was a need for soulful places for people to be.

Chair Livingston displayed some sketches he had prepared which proposed modifications to the open space to better accommodate the residents.

Speaking to the entry, Chair Livingston stated an entry was being put off a civic courtyard for civic institutional functions and there was a need to decouple that kind of institutional architecture from the residential. He added that funds were being spent to do that but could be better spent to provide open space for people. He suggested that area could be fenced off, the entries should be opposing each other, and there needed to be a sense of arrival created with a better residential feel. He displayed other sketches to address the institutional feel and make it more residential. He did not like the façade of Building A, stated that Building B looked like a hospital or other institution, suggested that decks could be integrated into the design, there needed to be a stronger sense of entry, warm and inviting materials needed to be used, and he recommended rooftop amenities to bring dignity and open space to those who would live in the buildings. He too urged that the proposal be made more residential and less institutional.

Boardmember Butt agreed that Building A related more to the courthouse than Building B, which she suggested was the crux of the issue.

Boardmember Leung stated massing and articulation of the fascia could be shown without affecting any of the criteria or requirements of affordable housing.

Boardmember Carter suggested with respect to Building B and its long hallway that the corner units that had their entry at the end of the hallway should have the entries switched on the same hallway so that there could be walls with windows in the corridors on either end to provide some natural light.

Chair Livingston encouraged BAR Architects to reach out to a subcommittee of the DRB to help streamline the process and move things along.

A break was taken at 8:32 P.M. and the meeting reconvened at 8:40 P.M.

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| 3. PLN20-331 | THE ANNEX TOWNHOME PROJECT |
| Description | STUDY SESSION TO PROVIDE AND RECEIVE COMMENTS ON THE DESIGN OF A NEW 100 DWELLING UNIT RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ON PARCELS TOTALING 4.7-ACRES, THE PROJECT INCLUDES RE-ZONING FROM CG (GENERAL COMMERCIAL) TO RM-1 (MEDIUM DENSITY MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL), VESTING TENTATIVE MAP, A VARIANCE TO REDUCE THE REQUIRED 10-FOOT FRONT SETBACK, AND A VARIANCE FOR HEIGHT. |
| Location | 2301 COLUMBIA AVENUE |
| APN | 507-251-015, -021, -020 |
| Zoning | CG, GENERAL COMMERCIAL DISTRICT |
| Owner | ABS-CBN INTERNATIONAL |
| Applicant | CITY VENTURES |

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Staff Contact EMILY CARROLL Recommendation: **PROVIDE AND RECEIVE COMMENTS**

Emily Carroll presented the staff report dated March 10, 2021 for the study session for the Annex Townhome Project, a 100 dwelling unit project and related subdivision improvements on parcels totaling 4.7 acres, with a number of entitlements including a Rezoning, Vesting Tentative Map, a Variance to reduce the required 10-foot front setback, and a Variance for height. She stated the site was comprised of three non-continuous parcels bounded on the west and east by freeways, with a rail line on the west and the Tibetan Center across the street from the site. She noted that the multi-family housing on the west side of Napa Street was not part of the project and would remain, and one of the street names had changed.

Ms. Carroll explained that the plans were in a conceptual stage. She presented the typical facades of the buildings and stated that staff had sought feedback on the design in the neighborhood context, site improvements and landscaping, and site circulation. She noted a neighboring industrial use to the north and there was a need for adequate buffering and space between the uses. She highlighted the variance requests with a half-foot setback variance request affecting the corner of Buildings 12, 11 and 4 where the 10-foot setback had been proposed at 9.5 feet. The second variance was for height, and more information was required to evaluate that request. She stated there was some grade on the site and a three to five-foot grade differential existed. A height variance up to 42 feet had been requested, which was expected to be refined when more information had been provided.

Ms. Carroll responded to comments and clarified that the parcel that divided the two pieces of the subject property were zoned General Commercial and would not be rezoned as part of the request. The applicant had reached out to the Southwest Annex Neighborhood Council but the council had not met and had not responded.

Chair Livingston disclosed that he had talked to the developer and had worked through a couple of general ideas.

Chair Livingston opened up public comments.

There were no comments.

SAMANTHA HAUSER, City Ventures, described the company which was a Bay Area builder of urban infill development developing for-sale sustainable housing. The proposed homes were solar/all electric with electric vehicle (EV) charging in every garage, Nest thermostats, low impact landscaping, low flow water fixtures, would use less lumber, and sought the latest sustainable technology. She stated that all of their projects purposefully looked different to complement the neighborhoods in which they were located. She reiterated that they had reached out to the Neighborhood Council, to housing groups, and to the Tibetan Center across the street. She described the site as underutilized, there were some remains from the prior use of the site, and there were some dumping concerns. The site itself had some complex grades and variations which fed into the request for a height variance and they had tried to put together a thoughtful site plan as to how to deal with the grades.

Ms. Hauser described how the site plan had been developed and proposed a pedestrian scale trellis element at the entry along with mature trees and a community garden, which had been included in many of their projects. She noted deficiencies in the existing sidewalk in the area of the Tibetan Center, which would be replaced. She described the amenities that had been proposed which included the community garden, open space with a mix of uses, a pocket amenity, a bike amenity that could interact with the bike path, and potentially an outdoor fitness

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area. The main goal was to create a strong street wall no matter the architecture by putting all the front doors and having usable patio spaces off of Columbia Avenue, Dali Lama Avenue, Napa Street and San Joaquin Street. She described the conceptual design, a modern repeated modularity, stated the flat roofs would accommodate solar, and a style would be created to complement the eclectic neighborhood. Different design schemes that had been proposed to better fit into the neighborhood were offered for DRB discussion.

Chair Livingston opened the public comments.

CAREN SLAUGHTER liked the development, the community gardens, and given the Homeowners Association (HOA) recommended a bulletin board at that location as well as at the central plaza.

Mr. Slaughter liked the pet owner and bicycle amenities, and suggested that one way to make townhomes look wider and differentiate themselves would be to potentially paint two adjoining units the same color and alternate. He recommended removing the second car tandem parking space and making it a flexible space to be either a home office or a live/work space potentially with small personal service shops like a barber shop or a nail salon since it was a 15-minute walk to the nearest grocery store. He also recommended a potential second entrance to create a separate livable unit to offset a mortgage as a new home buyer could rent out to family, friends, or the public. He recommended adding rooftop access and alternating the entrances on the frontage to ensure activities on all sides of the units. He characterized the project as excellent, liked that the concept had been presented first, and was glad to see the elimination of satellite dishes.

LOREN RUSSO, an attorney with the Eviction Defense Center, enthusiastically supported the development. As one who assisted in finding new housing for Richmond residents and who was currently looking for new housing herself, she stated that Richmond needed something new and uplifting. She suggested that Richmond should take charge in promoting the development of new attainable and sustainable housing. She noted the townhomes would provide more than 50 percent more open space and more parking than the city required and the sustainable elements would reduce the impacts of the property. She urged the DRB to support the project.

LORETTA, a Columbia Avenue resident, commented that the area had rapidly lost parking because there was not enough on-site parking and the streets were very narrow to where people parked on the curb and on the sidewalk. Her primary issue was the additional cars. She noted that when there were events at the Tibetan Center there were serious parking issues and she expressed concern that 100 additional homes would only add to the parking concerns. She also noted that traffic from the backed up freeways used the internal residential streets for travel. She urged the applicants to visit the neighborhood to learn of the traffic issues.

Chair Livingston verified with staff that a traffic study would be required as part of the application.

Boardmember Fine encouraged the applicant to explore alternatives to the name of the project given that the name 'annex' had already been used. She loved the project and had no problem with flat roofs in a contemporary design. She had similar concerns about traffic studies and a pedestrian oriented building design and was happy to see the sidewalk layout.

Commissioner Fine also encouraged the applicant to look at the circulation of traffic, bikes, and people and how the development could fit into the neighborhood in a cohesive way. She applauded the green efforts, recommended getting energy consultants on board early, and

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encouraged further study to show that the community garden would be in optimal locations in terms of sun path and overall siting strategy. She asked for illustrations with respect to the 10-foot front setback and the requested variance, requested an actual materials board, and wanted to see the perspective from each elevation in context.

Vice Chair Carter liked the project and the location and asked about the parking for visitors and deliveries, and Ms. Hauser explained that the majority of the guest parking would be along the west side of the parcel with potential parallel parking along the back of the project and in other areas of the development to spread it more evenly throughout.

Vice Chair Carter referred to the entries at Block 5 and suggested that was a secluded pathway. He appreciated the economy of scale that came with consistent floor plans but questioned whether there might need to be a different housing type or design for specific areas.

Vice Chair Carter agreed with the need to take advantage of the forward tandem space and make it a more flexible space. He asked how trash pickup would work and Ms. Hauser stated for Plan 1 the trash units would be tucked under the stairs.

Ms. Hauser explained that the units would be treated like single-family homes and there would be no central trash, and as long as the trash provider accepted it there would be individual trash pickup. They had also tried to make the drive aprons deeper to queue those efficiently.

Vice Chair Carter supported the solar and all electric and understood the higher parapet panels were needed to screen the mechanical equipment. With respect to roof decks, he suggested that if isolating the equipment and PV and providing space, it would be good to provide roof decks given the spectacular views, which would add value to the project.

With respect to the alternative elevations, Vice Chair Carter liked the pitched roof option which added another layer of character, the overhang element at the entries to make them more easily identifiable, and the way it integrated things more vertically with more expression of the units themselves. He agreed that doubling up colors and materials for two units at a time, as earlier recommended, would make them look twice as wide.

Boardmember Leung suggested that roof decks should be provided for each unit given the need for privacy and to take advantage of the views, she supported more articulation between the units, and supported more trees to screen the industrial yard immediately to the north. With respect to the two or more houses placed along San Joaquin Street, she recommended fences or taller trees to shield the busy street and supported more landscaping on the north, east and west sides of the project. She supported more pocket parks and the pet area, and suggested the front could be more welcoming with a different tree type or tree color.

Boardmember Butt liked the urban planning moves and supported the garages in the back, the stoops along the front, and the unique site. She agreed with the need for a traffic study, suggested the proposal represented a great reuse of an abandoned area, asked if there was a strategy to address those areas where the front door was really the back door, and stated she liked Alternative 1 with the variations in materiality and the gable roofs, which fit in better with the eclectic area. She also agreed with the need to avoid changing the building color too frequently. She liked the community garden, the co-housing element, recommended a tot lot, supported the pet area, and noted the close proximity and convenience to Point Isabel where larger dogs could exercise. She also suggested the entry needed to be warmer and more welcoming,

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Chair Livingston thanked the applicant for the alternative elevations, particularly Alternative 1, and commented that one of the issues with cementitious buildings was there was no way to attenuate sound in the auto courts. There was also a blank façade in the back. He recommended the integration of a trellis system above the garage doors in the back coupled with landscaping to provide some sound attenuation and to soften the bleak rear elevation. He referred to the plans showing a six- to eight-foot fence on the north property line and supported at least an eight-foot wall and the planting of vines on the wall, with the same thing on the north side. He agreed that there were significant views that could be captured.

Board Business

A. Staff reports, requests, or announcements: None

B. Boardmember reports, requests, or announcements:

Boardmember Fine recommended that the DRB be more diligent about the time allowed for presentations and set a consistent expectation for every applicant whether during a public hearing or during a study session.

Ms. Moore concurred that there should be a consistent, equitable allotment of time for all applicants.

The DRB discussed the time allotments and staff suggested that perhaps only one study session should be scheduled each meeting, with clear communication with the applicant ahead of time, and with the establishment of an appropriate time uniformly applied.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 P.M. to the next regular Design Review Board meeting on Wednesday, March 24, 2021.