

Planning Commission Agenda Report

February 28, 2018
Item 6.c.

- SUBJECT:** P17-0907
- APPLICANT:** Robert Lyman, Johnson Lyman Architects
- PROPERTY OWNER:** Dennis Winslow
- PURPOSE:** Workshop to review and receive comments on a Design Review application to retain an existing, approximately 1,042-square-foot, single-story single-family residence and to construct an approximately 3,841-square-foot, two-story, two-unit apartment building behind the existing residence and related site improvements.
- LOCATION:** 4722 Harrison Street
- GENERAL PLAN:** High Density Residential
- SPECIFIC PLAN:** Downtown Specific Plan – High Density Residential
- ZONING:** RM-1,500 (Multi-Family Residential), Core Area Overlay District
- EXHIBITS:**
- A. [Discussion Topics](#)
 - B. [Project Plans dated "Received January 17, 2018"](#)
 - C. [Arborist Report dated October 18, 2017](#)
 - D. [Location and Notification Map](#)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission review the proposed Design Review application, hear public comments, and provide comments to staff and the applicant. No formal action will be taken on this project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The applicant, Robert Lyman, is proposing to retain an existing, approximately 1,042-square-foot, single-story single-family residence and to construct an approximately 3,841-square-foot, two-story, two-unit apartment building behind the existing residence and related site improvements at 4722 Harrison St. As proposed, the project conforms to the General Plan, Downtown Specific Plan, and zoning requirements. The project is being presented as a workshop item to allow the Planning Commission an early opportunity to review the plans and provide direction to staff and the applicant on any identified design issues. The

workshop also provides the public with an early opportunity to review and comment on the project.

BACKGROUND

On February 24, 2017, the applicant submitted a Preliminary Review application with a proposal to retain the existing residence and construct three new apartment units within two new buildings and related site improvements at 4722 Harrison St. Staff was supportive of a project that would retain and improve the existing residence on the project site, but had concerns related to the proposed layout, on-site parking, aesthetics, architectural styling, and the need for the design of the buildings to be consistent with the Downtown Specific Plan and Downtown Design Guidelines. Specifically, staff had concerns related to the proposed number of units versus the proposed on-site parking and also with the lack of a clear traditional architectural style to better reflect the visual character of downtown and be consistent with the Specific Plan and Design Guidelines.

On October 20, 2017, the applicant submitted a formal application for Design Review to retain and renovate the exterior of the existing residence and to construct an approximately 3,841-square-foot, two-story, two-unit apartment building behind the existing residence along with related site improvements. Three key changes from the Preliminary Review submittal included: (1) reducing the total number of new units from three to two; (2) providing the minimum code-required on-site parking to accommodate the existing and proposed units; and (3) redesigning the proposed new units to be more compatible with the architectural character of downtown.

There have been a number of recently approved and/or completed residential infill projects in the downtown in recent years, including housing types, ranging from apartments to single-family homes. Examples of this include:

- 4693, 4703, and 4715 Augustine Street and 301, 305, and 309 Augustine Place
- 4791 Augustine Street
- 4745 Augustine Street
- 4664, 4676, and 4682 Augustine Street

There also have been other PUD applications elsewhere in downtown that have recently been approved that retained existing on-site structures and developed the project site with additional detached or attached for sale or rental units. These projects are located at 560 St. John St. and 377 St. Mary St. During review of these projects, staff and Planning Commission comments have frequently addressed issues similar to those noted above for this project, including the need to include appropriately scaled buildings and accommodate necessary on-site parking and open space.

It should also be noted that the City is currently undertaking an update to the Downtown Specific Plan. While the Task Force appointed to guide the Specific Plan update has emphasized the need for infill projects to be “context-sensitive” with design that is consistent and compatible with the existing scale and character, the group has remained supportive of allowing for this type of development as a means to encourage more affordable and compact housing on infill sites in downtown.

SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION

The project site is located within the southwestern part of the Downtown Specific Plan Area that comprises both single- and two-story attached and detached residential units. The subject site is approximately 150 feet from the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, measured from the tracks to the closest property line of the project site. Figures 1 and 2 show an aerial photograph and street-scene view of the subject site and the existing residence.

The subject property is located on the east side of Harrison Street, is approximately 0.17 acres in area, is generally rectangular in shape, and is relatively flat. There is an existing, single-story, single-family residence that fronts Harrison Street. Additionally, a detached two-car garage with an open-sided patio cover is located towards the rear of the project site and accessed from a single driveway off Harrison Street. Perimeter fencing is installed along the north, south, and east sides of the property and a low, approximately three-foot tall, open-style wood picket fence encloses the front yard. The existing single-family residence is approximately 1,042 square feet in area, and since it was built in 1949, was not evaluated in the City's Historic Resource Survey which address properties built pre-1942. Four mature trees are scattered throughout the eastern portion of the project site and one City street tree is planted along the project site frontage. Two of the existing trees, an English Walnut (on-site) and a Modesto Ash (the street tree), qualify as Heritage Trees.

The properties adjacent to the subject parcels include a mix of both single- and multi-family units and most lots share a similar relatively narrow, but deep, configuration.

Figure 1: Aerial photograph of project site

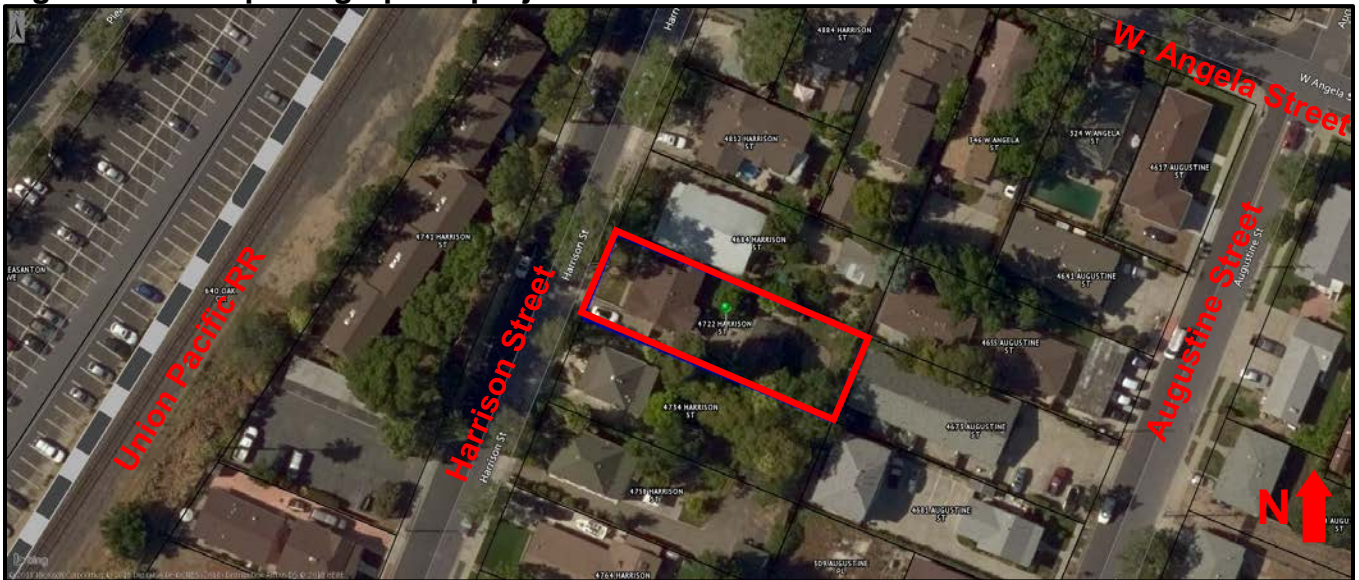


Figure 2: Street-scene of project site



EXISTING LAND USE DESIGNATION AND ZONING

The General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan designate the project site for High Density Residential uses – allowing for residential development of greater than eight units per gross acre. The General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan have language that encourages and/or allows a variety of housing types (i.e., detached and attached single-family homes, duplexes, townhouses, condominiums, and apartments) under the High Density Residential designation provided that all requirements of the Zoning Ordinance are met.

The project site is zoned RM-1,500 (Multi-Family Residential) District, and is in the Core Area Overlay District. The purpose of the Core Area Overlay District is to encourage the efficient use of land consisting of parcels of unusual size and shape located in the core area of Pleasanton and to facilitate the development of smaller multi-family rental housing projects; thus, the overlay applies to mixed multi-family/commercial and office uses or multi-family projects containing 10 or fewer rental units only.

PROPOSED PROJECT

Site Plan/Layout

The applicant is proposing to retain the existing approximately 1,042-square-foot, single-story, single-family residence and construct an approximately 3,841-square-foot, two-story, apartment building incorporating two side-by-side (duplex) units, behind the existing residence, and related site improvements. Please refer to Figure 3 for the site plan and Figure 4 for a street perspective rendering. Complete project plans are included in Exhibit B).

The existing two-car garage, attached patio cover, and existing hardscape and landscaping would be demolished and all four existing trees (including one Heritage tree) that are on-site removed to accommodate the project. The existing perimeter fence would also be removed and replaced with a new, 6-foot-tall, solid wood fence along the north, south, and east property lines. The existing wood picket fence in the front yard would remain. In addition, the existing driveway off Harrison Street would be removed and replaced with a new driveway of the same width and in the same location.

A total of five on-site parking spaces would be provided for the three units; three surface level (uncovered) spaces and two covered spaces within garages. Four of the five spaces would be oriented along the northern portion of the site and would require on-site left turn movements from the new driveway for access while one space would be accessible straight-on from the new driveway. Exiting the parking spaces would potentially require several on-site vehicular movements as shown on Plan Sheet A6 in Exhibit B.

Architecture

The architectural design for the proposed apartment building (Figure 5) would be similar to that of the existing residence, emulating a “Minimal Traditional” style which is typified by simplistic forms, uncomplicated cladding and wall finishes, clean lines, simple detailing, low-pitched roof elements, and shallow eave overhangs. As shown, the most noticeable architectural elements include simple covered entries, low-pitched gable roof elements, wall plane articulation on all sides, and shallow eave overhangs. The proposed apartment building, would echo many of these same features, would be clad with horizontal cement fiber lapped siding and feature a composition shingle roof. The body color for all buildings would be a medium gray with white trim elements. The roof color would be a darker slate gray color. The existing residence would be repainted the same color as the proposed apartment building and also receive a new composition shingle roof to match the proposed apartment building. No other exterior changes are proposed to the existing residence.

Landscaping

New perimeter landscaping would be installed along the front, sides, and rear of the proposed apartment building toward the rear of the project site. The landscape plan includes a tree/plant palette of native and non-native species that are primarily drought tolerant, as well as some hardscape features, including concrete patios and stepping stones. The new driveway would also be concrete.

Figure 3: Site Plan

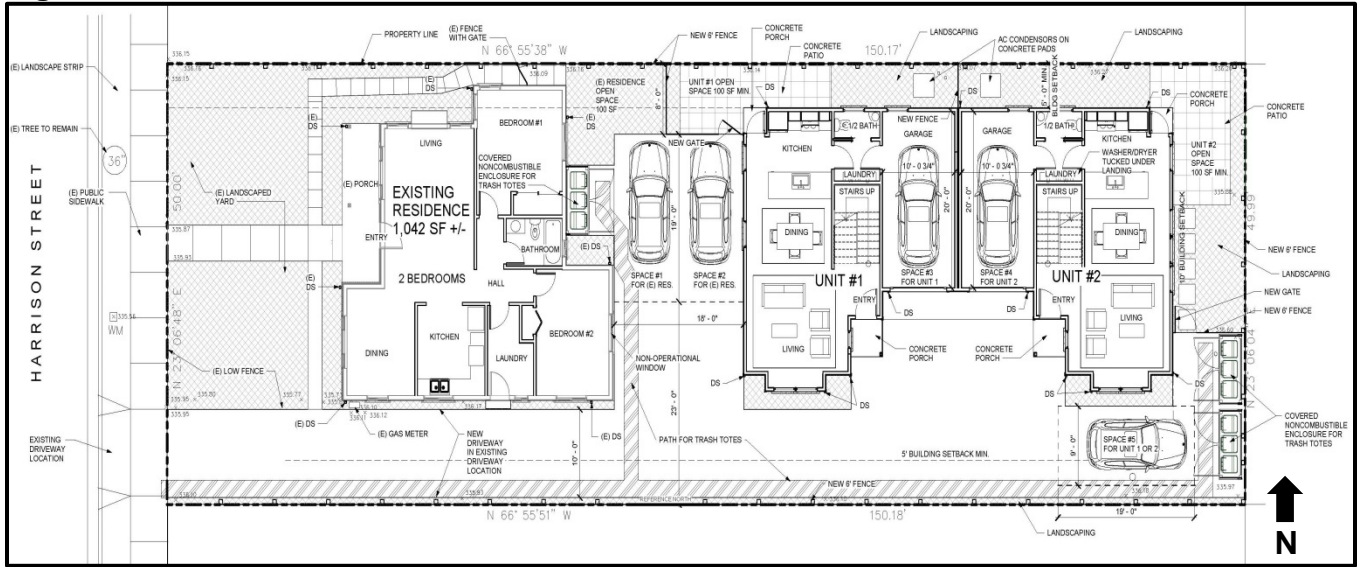


Figure 4: Street Perspective Rendering



Figure 5: Proposed elevations

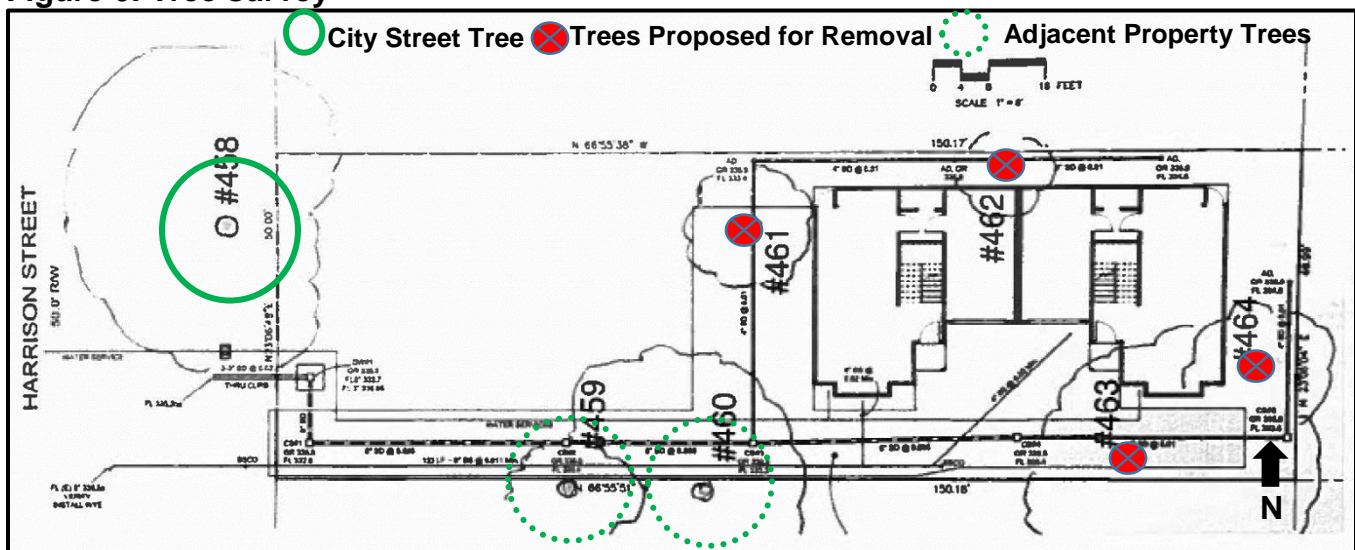


Trees / Tree Removal

An arborist report prepared for the project surveyed all trees, measuring six inches and greater in diameter, within and adjacent to the project site. A total of seven trees comprising seven species were surveyed (please refer to Exhibit C for the tree report and Figure 5 below for the tree survey map). Of the trees surveyed, four are on-site, with the remaining three being off-site either within the public right of way (one City street tree – Tree No. 458) or on the neighboring property at 4734 Harrison St. (tree Nos. 459 and 460). Four of the seven trees surveyed are Heritage-sized (as defined by the Pleasanton Municipal Code (PMC)). Of these four trees, two are located on the neighboring property at 4734 Harrison St. (Tree Nos. 459 and 460), one is a City street tree at the front of the project site within the public right of way (Tree No. 458), and one is located at the southeast corner of the project site (Tree No. 463).

Due to conflicts with building pad locations and/or within areas where grading and/or infrastructure is proposed, all four of the on-site trees, including the Heritage-sized tree (Tree No. 463), are proposed for removal (see Figure 6). The tree species to be removed include an Orange tree (Tree No. 461), a Crepe Myrtle tree (Tree No. 462), an English Walnut tree (Tree No. 463), and a Yew pine tree (Tree No. 464). The two Heritage trees located on the neighboring property at 4734 Harrison St. (Tree Nos. 459 and 460) would be preserved and would generally be unaffected by the proposed project. The Heritage-sized City street tree (Tree No. 458) would also be preserved.

Figure 6: Tree survey



CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE WORKSHOP

Staff is presenting the commission with the plans for the project site (Exhibit B) for consideration and comments. This workshop will provide the Planning Commission the opportunity to provide direction to the applicant and staff regarding any issues it wishes to be addressed prior to the project returning to the Planning Commission for action on the Design Review application. Please see the *Discussion Topics* section below or Exhibit A which provide questions where staff would find the commission's input most helpful.

Density, Zoning and Site Development Standards

Allowable Density

The General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan designate the project site as High Density Residential – allowing for residential development of greater than eight units per gross acre. Policies in the General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan encourage and/or allow a variety of housing types (i.e., detached and attached single-family homes, duplexes, townhouses, condominiums, and apartments) under the High Density designation provided that all requirements of the Zoning Ordinance are met. As proposed, there would be three dwelling units on the 0.17-acre project site, which results in a density of 17 dwelling units per acre, consistent with the General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan High Density Residential land use designation.

Conformance with Zoning Standards

The property is zoned RM-1,500 (Multi-Family Residential) District and located in the Core Area Overlay District. The project would include retention of the existing single-family residence and construction of a two-unit apartment building. All three units would be for rental purposes. Therefore, the project qualifies for the modified development standards for multi-family housing projects in the Core Area Overlay District, which applies to projects with 10 or fewer multi-family rental units.

The Core Overlay District was established for the purpose of facilitating the development of smaller (10 units or less) multi-family rental housing or mixed-use multi-family rental housing/commercial and office projects in downtown. The Core Area Overlay District has modified standards which relax the standard requirements for setbacks (for multiple-family zoned properties), parking, and open space in order to accomplish this objective.

The narrow, long lots prevalent in downtown are sometimes difficult to develop in a manner which produces a satisfactory living environment and which minimizes negative effects on neighbors. Nevertheless, in adopting the Core Area Overlay District, the City recognized that additional development could occur, and should be encouraged, on such lots. The modified development standards were designed to allow development on these types of lots which would not be forced into a rigid mold (which could yield results unsatisfactory to neighboring properties and to the "old town" image of downtown Pleasanton), but rather which could relate more sensitively to the neighborhood.

The central idea behind the reduced standards was to retain existing structures, usually located in the front of the lot, thus maintaining the "old town" look, to take advantage of on-street parking, and to minimize driveway and parking lot paving. This was accomplished by: reducing the rear yard setbacks from 30 feet to 10 feet for RM (multiple-family) zoned properties, encouraging the placement of new units at the rear of the lot, reducing private open space requirements, deleting group open space requirements, reducing the resident parking standards, deleting all visitor parking requirements, and eliminating covered parking requirements.

Section 18.36.030(C) of the PMC allows a combination of attached or detached dwellings, including duplexes, multi-family dwellings, dwelling groups, row houses and townhomes in the RM-1,500 District. As shown in Table 1 below, the proposed project would conform to the applicable RM-1,500 and the Core Area Overlay District development standards.

Furthermore, in an RM district, no structure is permitted to exceed the height of a sloping plane 15 feet in height at the interior of the minimum required side yard (5 feet for the Core Area Overlay District) or at the minimum required rear yard (10 feet for the Core Area Overlay District), and sloping away from the side property line 5 feet for each additional 15 feet in height (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Sloping Plane Graphic

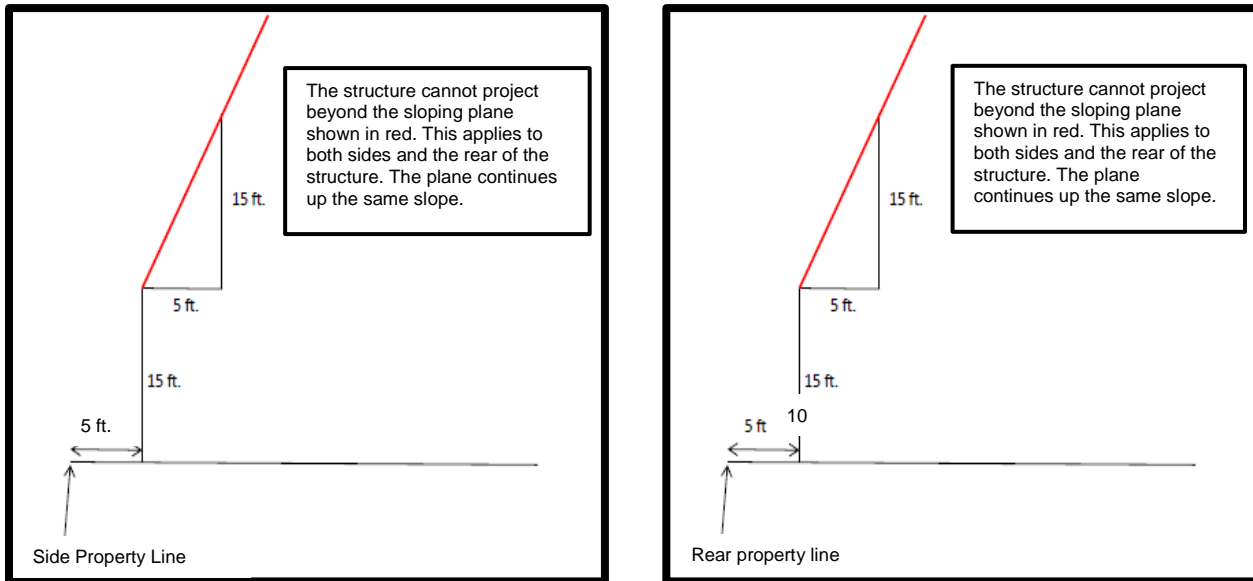


Table 1: City Zoning Requirements (Core Overlay District) vs. Proposed Project (Apartment Building Only)

Site Development Standard	City Requirements	Proposed Project
Lot Size	10,500 sq. ft. min.	7,509 sq. ft.
Lot Width / Depth	80 ft. / 100 ft. min.	50 ft. / 150 ft.
Site Area per Dwelling Unit	1,500 sq. ft. min. per dwelling unit	2,503 sq. ft. per dwelling unit
Floor Area Ratio	50% max.	45.3%
Building Height	30 feet max. ¹	23 ft., 10 in.
Sloping Plane	No structure shall exceed the height of a sloping plane 15 feet in height at the interior of the minimum required side and rear yard, and sloping away from the side and rear property line five feet for each additional 15 feet in height.	Conforms (see Exhibit B)
Setbacks		
Front	15 ft. min.	78 ft.
Side / Aggregate Between the Two Sides	5 ft. min / 10 ft. min.	5 ft. / 15 ft.
Rear	10 ft. min.	10 ft.
Parking	5 parking spaces min.	5 parking spaces
Private Open Space Standards	100 sq. ft. per unit min.	Unit 1 = 230 sq. ft. / Unit 2 = 450 sq. ft.

1. The height of a structure, as defined by the PMC, is measured from the average elevation of the natural grade of the ground covered by the structure to the mean height between eaves and ridges for a hip, gable, or gambrel roof.

Driveway Access and Design

As previously described, the existing driveway off Harrison Street would be removed and replaced with a new driveway in the same location. This new driveway would also provide pedestrian access to the new units at the rear of the site. In an RM district, a separate pedestrian walk is normally required between the units and the front property line. However, on smaller in-fill sites, such as the project site, staff has in the past been supportive of providing relief from this requirement by allowing projects to utilize the vehicular driveway to serve both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. This concept has been recently supported and applied on two similar projects; one at 4745 Augustine St. and the other at 434 Rose Ave. Staff believes this approach should also be applied for the proposed project given the limited width of the project site, desire to maintain the existing single-family home on-site, and because of the relatively limited amount of vehicular traffic and low vehicle speeds along the driveway, which would limit vehicular and pedestrian conflicts.

In correspondence with the applicant, staff recommended the use of pavers and/or special paving within the new driveway and motor court area up to the front doors of the new apartment units. Staff also recommended the use of pavers and/or special paving be used within the uncovered parking spaces at a minimum within parking space No. 5 which would be visible from the street. Additionally, staff recommended a mow strip be included down the center of the driveway up to the front edge of the existing residence. As proposed, none of these recommendations have been incorporated into the project. Staff believes the incorporation of one or more of these recommendations would substantially increase the quality of the project aesthetics and better reflect the character of downtown's residential neighborhoods.

Off-Street Parking

The Core Area Overlay District requires 1.5 parking spaces for each two-bedroom rental unit, which may be covered or uncovered. No visitor parking is required pursuant to the Core Area Overlay District. Accordingly, the proposed project is required to provide five on-site parking spaces, with which the proposed project would comply. In downtown, and especially on smaller, in-fill, development sites, providing the required parking can be difficult. Not only does the project meet the requirements, but it provides a mix of both covered and uncovered parking. As such, staff supports the parking as proposed.

Staff notes that typically a minimum of 25 feet of backup distance is required for on-site parking on these types of in-fill projects and 23 feet of backup distance is currently proposed. Staff and the Planning Commission have supported reduced backup distances for in-fill projects on small, downtown in-fill sites in the past. An example of a project with reduced backup distance includes the project currently under construction at 273 Spring St. (multi-family apartments), where the Planning Commission supported a 20-foot backup distance. In this case, the applicant has provided a plan sheet (Sheet A6 in Exhibit B) with turning templates that demonstrate the provided backup distances are adequate for ingress/egress from each of the provided parking spaces. While staff acknowledges the path of travel is not ideal, because several movements may be needed to maneuver into the space, especially for a larger vehicle, staff believes 23 feet of backup distance can be supported given the small number of units and vehicles parked on site.

Architecture and Design

The proposed apartment building is designed to emulate architectural features found on the existing residence. The architecture of both the existing residence and proposed apartment building is a “Minimal Traditional” style, which is one of the architectural styles required to be used for new residential buildings in downtown.

The proposed building would generally use high quality and durable finishes including smooth finish horizontal lap siding, smooth wood trim, and high density composition shingle roofing.

In staff’s view, the applicant has provided sufficient articulation on all building elevations to break up the two-story façades and provide visual relief. The proposed building height is also compatible with those of the surrounding neighborhood, which include a mix of one-story and two-story single- and multi-family homes. Staff also believes that the materials and colors are appropriate for the architectural style of the buildings.

Overall, staff generally believes that the design of the proposed apartment building is attractive and appropriate for downtown, conforms to the traditional character of the downtown, complies with the Downtown Design Guidelines, and would complement the existing buildings on Harrison Street and other areas in downtown. However, staff believes the building design could be further improved and refined through the incorporation of the following:

- Enhanced and high quality eave detailing such as exposed rafter tails, corbels, kickers, et cetera.
- More substantial (wider and deeper) window trim to provide articulation to the building façade.
- High quality windows with thick trim elements/profiles
- Carriage-style garage doors, recessed from the wall.
- Incorporating a more substantial and defined porch entry and raising the finished floor of the building to create a “step-up” to the front porch/entry from the ground plane.

General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan Land Use Conformance

Applicable General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan policies, objectives, and programs include the following:

- *General Plan - Community Character Element policy and programs.*
 - *Policy 3 – Maintain the scale and character of downtown.*
 - *Program 3.1 – Require the height, mass, setbacks, and architectural style of new buildings to be reflective of the current downtown scale and character.*
- *General Plan – Land Use Element policy and programs.*
 - *Policy 9: Develop new housing in infill and peripheral areas which are adjacent to existing residential development, near transportation hubs or local-serving commercial areas.*
 - *Program 2.1: Reduce the need for vehicular traffic by locating employment, residential, and service activities close together, and plan development so it is easily accessible by transit, bicycle, and on foot.*

- *General Plan – Housing Element policy and programs.*
 - *Policy 37: Disperse high-density housing throughout the community, in areas near public transit, major thoroughfares, shopping, and employment centers.*
 - *Policy 38: Strongly encourage residential infill in areas where public facilities are or can be made to be adequate to support such development.*
- *Downtown Specific Plan – Residential Land Use.*
 - *Policy 6 - Encourage development at densities which generally exceed the General Plan range midpoints in order to enhance the opportunities for affordable housing, unique housing types, and economic growth in downtown.*
- *Downtown Specific Plan – Land Use.*
 - *Goal – Preserve the character and development traditions of downtown while improving upon its commercial and residential viability.*
 - *Objective 1 – To retain the small-town scale and physical character of downtown through the implementation of appropriate land use and development standards.*
- *Downtown Specific Plan - Design and Beautification.*
 - *Policy 17 - Protect the established size and spacing of buildings in residential neighborhoods by avoiding excessive lot coverage and maintaining appropriate separations between buildings.*
 - *Policy 20 - When a lot exceeds 60 feet in width, detached garages are required and shall be located to the rear of the site. Exceptions can be granted due to a physical constraint that prevents compliance such as an existing heritage-sized tree or inadequate lot depth. Provide screened rear parking for multi-family units.*

As described in the above sections, staff believes the overall size and massing/bulk of the proposed apartment building is consistent with the scale of other multi-family buildings within the surrounding neighborhood. The applicant has made an effort to provide inconspicuous or set-back garages/surface parking and an architectural design that is reflective of the downtown character and the homes on Harrison Street. Furthermore, the proposed project would promote Specific Plan policies regarding the provision of affordable housing as follows: The amount of modestly sized rental housing in the City would be increased; and the applicant would be required to contribute to the City’s affordable housing fund for the two new units.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

The following questions are where staff would find the Commission’s input most helpful. Please also see Exhibit A.

- A. *Is the proposed density for the project site acceptable?*
- B. *Are the proposed site layout and access acceptable?*
- C. *Is the proposed parking for the project acceptable, including the proposed parking access and maneuverability?*
- D. *Is the architectural style and design of the proposed apartment building acceptable?*

E. What other information would assist the Planning Commission in its decision on the proposed project (e.g., additional photo simulations)?

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notices for this workshop were sent to surrounding property owners and tenants within a 1,000-foot radius of the site. Staff has provided the location and notification map as Exhibit D for reference. At the time this report was published, staff had not received any public comments about the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Since the Planning Commission will take no formal action on the project at the workshop, no environmental document accompanies this workshop report.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission review the proposal, hear all public testimony, and provide comments to staff and the applicant.

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