



Planning Commission Staff Report

September 9, 2015

Item 6.a.

SUBJECT: P15-0290

**APPLICANT/
PROPERTY OWNER:** Alok Ventures LLC

PURPOSE: Application for Design Review approval to construct three apartment units and related site improvements behind an existing dwelling unit

LOCATION: 4745 Augustine St.

GENERAL PLAN: High Density Residential

SPECIFIC PLAN: Downtown Specific Plan: High Density Residential

ZONING: RM-1,500 (Multi-Family Residential), Downtown Revitalization, and Core Area Overlay

EXHIBITS:

- A. [Draft Conditions of Approval for Option #1](#)
- B. [Option #1, #2, and #3 Plans](#)
- C. [Draft Conditions of Approval for Option #2](#)
- D. [July 22, 2015 Planning Commission Staff Report](#)
- E. [July 22, 2015 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes](#)

BACKGROUND

On July 22, 2015, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing to consider a proposal by Alok Ventures LLC for design review approval to construct three apartment units (in two buildings), six garage parking spaces, and related site improvements behind the existing single-family dwelling at 4745 Augustine Street.

During the hearing, the applicant and his architect presented the proposal, and residents of one household located at 4731 Augustine Street expressed opposition, citing concerns about the proposal's building mass, obstruction of views of Pleasanton Ridge, and potential parking and traffic constraints. As described in the July 22, 2015 meeting minutes (Exhibit E), the Planning Commission was generally supportive of the number of units and bedrooms proposed by the applicant, but expressed concern about

the effect of the site plan and building mass on the neighbors' view. The Planning Commission directed the applicant to work with staff to address the neighbors' view concerns and to bring the proposal back to the Commission within 90 days.

Since the July 22nd public hearing, the applicant has coordinated with staff and the affected neighbors to better understand the desired views to be protected, and to discuss and review potential site planning and massing configurations. Staff and neighbors, as well as the applicant, met at 4731 Augustine Street ascertain the approximate view corridor that the neighbors desire to be retained. After meeting on site, staff established that the neighbors have limited views from two west facing bedroom windows. The views are limited as they are already partially obscured by existing structures along Harrison Street and Old Bernal Avenue, as well as existing landscaping that will likely grow larger in the future. Below within Figure 1 are photos taken from the front and rear bedroom windows located along the west elevation of 4731 Augustine Street. Although Pleasanton Ridge can be seen from these points, the views are substantially obscured.

Figure 1: Views from 4731 Augustine Street



In response to the Planning Commission's direction, the applicant has proposed two additional options for consideration—identified as Options #2 and #3 in the analysis below. The applicant has illustrated in the plans in each of the new options the view corridor desired for protection as seen from 4731 Augustine Street. The applicant is amenable to all three options proposed (including the original proposal discussed at the July 22nd hearing). The neighbors in opposition to the original proposal supports Options #2 and #3, but have expressed a preference for Option #3.

For a site description, additional background information on the site, and analysis of the originally proposed project (Option #1), please refer to Exhibit D, the July 22, 2015 Planning Commission staff report and attachments.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION - REVISED PLANS

The applicant has submitted two additional options for the Planning Commission's and public's consideration, as shown in Exhibit B. Similar to Option #1, both proposals include three new units (two 2-bedroom and one 1-bedroom units) and a total of six parking spaces to accommodate all four units on the site. Both new proposals utilize the same proposed materials and architectural style as the original Option #1 proposal: generally square massing and gable roofs, with grey horizontal smooth lap siding, white vinyl windows, and grey concrete roof tiles. Side and rear setbacks are consistent with Option #1, with approximately 6-foot side yard setbacks and 10-foot rear setbacks. Improvements to the existing home are consistent across all of the alternatives.

However, the two new options consolidate all three new units within one building instead of two buildings, as proposed in Option #1. As a result, in both scenarios the building massing is concentrated toward the rear of the site and the middle portion of the site is reserved for three uncovered parking spaces to protect the view corridor. This configuration helps to retain partial views of the ridgelines from the neighboring property.

Option #2: 2-Story Building at Rear of Site

In Option #2, a two-story building is proposed at the back of the lot, with two 2-story units, three garage spaces, and a third unit (Unit A) on the second floor proposed to be extended above the garage entries, supported by small posts. The area under Unit A allows for backing in and out of the garages and uncovered spaces. This option measures approximately 22 feet in height from grade to the top of the roof ridge. Open space is provided in the rear yard for Units B and C and in a balcony at the southeast corner of the structure for Unit A.

Option #3: 3-Story Building at Rear of Site

In Option #3, a three-story building is proposed at the back of the lot, with two 2-story units on the first two floors similar to Options #1 and #2, and a third unit located on the third floor. This option measures approximately 31 feet in height from grade to the top of the ridge. In this scenario, a door in the garage supplies stairwell access to the top floor unit. This option does not meet Building Code requirements in regard to exiting for the third story unit and would require additional modifications, including reconfiguring the proposed stairwell to provide access outside of the garage. The 2-story units would be accessed from the entrances on the respective side yards.

ANALYSIS

Land Use

The subject site has a General Plan designation of High Density Residential and is zoned Multi-Family Residential (RM-1,500), Downtown Revitalization, and Core Area Overlay. It is also located within the Downtown Specific Plan Area. The current regulations encourage second units in the rear of existing homes and the construction

of duplexes instead of multi-story apartment buildings. The proposed units are subject to Design Review approval.

Site Development Standards

Table 1, on the next page, compares development standards and policy regulations for all three proposed options.

Similar to Option #1, Option #2 generally conforms to the requirements of the General Plan, Downtown Specific Plan, and Zoning Ordinance in terms of use, density, open space, and parking; however, staff believes that the architecture does not meet the goals described in the Downtown Design Guidelines as described in the Architecture and Site Design section of this report. Option #3, does not meet current Building Code requirements or the objectives of the applicable City policy documents, particularly in regard to building height and massing, as discussed below.

All three options would provide additional rental housing Downtown, while generally maintaining the existing streetscape along Augustine Street, and an older single-family home would be improved.

Scope of Design Review – Criteria

Pleasanton Municipal Code Section 18.20.030 indicates that the Planning Commission or Zoning Administrator shall review site plans, landscape plans, building architecture, and other such plans as may be required to preserve and enhance the City's aesthetic values and to ensure the preservation of the public health, safety, and general welfare. Staff notes that even though a proposed structure may comply with the development standards of the applicable zoning district, through the design review process the Municipal Code allows the reviewing body to approve conditions which may be more restrictive than normal Code standards to ensure that the public health, safety, or general welfare is preserved. As outlined in Section 18.20.030, the Planning Commission's or Zoning Administrator's scope of review of project plans shall include but not be limited to the following design criteria (only select criteria most applicable to the proposed project are listed):

- Appropriate relationship of the proposed building and its site to adjoining areas, including compatibility of architectural styles, harmony in adjoining buildings, attractive landscape transitions, and consistency with neighbor character.
- Preservation of views enjoyed by residents, workers within the City, and passersby through the community.
- Architectural style, as a function of its quality of design and relationship to its surroundings; the relationship of building components to one another/the building's colors and materials; and the design attention given to mechanical equipment or other utility hardware on roof, ground or buildings.

Table 1: City Requirements compared to the Proposed Project

Site Development Standard	City Requirement per RM-1,500 and Core Area Overlay	Option #1: July 22, 2015 Proposed Project	Option #2: Two-story at Rear of Site	Option #2: Three-story at Rear of Site
Site Area per Dwelling Unit	1,500 sq. ft. minimum	1,874 sq. ft. per unit		
Floor Area Ratio	50% maximum	46%		
Building Height				
Per Code Rule of Measurement*	40 feet maximum	Approx. 19.25 feet for each Building	19.25 feet	29 feet
Grade to Top Ridge of Roof	--	Approx. 22 feet for each Building	Approx. 22 feet	Approx. 31 feet
Setbacks				
Front (east)	15 feet minimum	16 feet (existing home)		
Side (north)	5 feet	13 feet (Building 1) 6 feet (Building 2)	6 feet	
Side (south)	5 feet	6 feet	6 feet	Approx. 6 feet
Rear (west)	10 feet minimum	10 feet		
Open Space				
Private	1-bdrm units: 75 sq. ft. min. 2- or more bdrm units: 50 sq. ft. per bdrm min.	Unit A (1-bdrm): 100 sq. ft. Unit B (2-bdrm): 330 sq. ft. Unit C (2-bdrm): 298 sq. ft.	Unit A (1-bdrm): 118 sq. ft. Unit B (2-bdrm): 330 sq. ft. Unit C (2-bdrm): 298 sq. ft.	Unit A (2-bdrm): 330 sq. ft. Unit B (2-bdrm): 298 sq. ft. Unit C (1-bdrm): 140 sq. ft.
Group	None	None		
Parking				
Private	1.5 spaces per 1- or 2-bedroom unit	6 garage spaces	3 uncovered spaces and 3 garage spaces (6 total)	
Guest	None	None		

*Note: Per PMC Chapter 18.84.140, for this type of proposal, height is measured from grade to mean height between eave and ridge.

Architectural and Site Design

Option #1: Two 2-Story Buildings

Staff finds that Option #1 meets all applicable requirements of the Pleasanton Municipal Code, and is consistent with the provisions of the Downtown Specific Plan and the Downtown Design Guidelines. Given the constraints of working within a relatively small narrow lot, staff believes that the original Option #1 is the most attractive multi-family residential option. Staff also finds the architectural style of Option #1 to be appropriate for Downtown and believes that the buildings would complement the existing buildings on Augustine Street and in the surrounding neighborhood. City staff worked with the applicant prior to the first hearing to reduce the building height and improve the architectural design in order to meet the intent of the Downtown Design Guidelines and other City regulations. Staff believes that Option #2 and #3 do not reflect the massing of single-family homes and duplexes on and near the site, which employ more building articulation, changes in plane, and gable and other roof forms that the applicant incorporated into Option #1. Staff requested substantial adjustments to the design, including elimination of the third floor of Building 1, more refined building massing and articulation, and a more subdued color palette. The applicant implemented staff's recommendations by utilizing projecting forms and windows, recesses, and changes in materials and/or colors to create more visual interest, and an overall architectural form and design that would be compatible with the site and the surrounding neighborhood. While some views from private property may be adversely affected, staff believes that the originally proposed Option #1 is the most architecturally cohesive and attractive design, and that it most closely achieves the intent of the Downtown Design Guidelines. In particular, Option #1 achieves the objective in the Downtown Specific Plan that additional units in the rear of the property be duplexes and not multi-story apartment buildings.

Option #2: 2-Story Building at Rear of Site

Staff finds the site layout Option #2 meets Code requirements for parking and circulation, and is sensitive to adjacent residential properties in terms of building height, scale, and massing. Compared to Option #1, though, the design of Option #2 is inferior since the overall appearance of the extended cantilevered-like unit above the garage entries has not been designed to follow the rhythm and scale of the surrounding homes to include more refined building massing and articulation, as required within the Downtown Design Guidelines. In addition, the balcony on Unit A compromises the symmetry of the building viewable from the front and east elevations. All elevations lack massing, projecting forms and windows, and recesses to create more visual interest.

Option #3: 3-Story Building at Rear of Site

Option #3 is the proposal with the most compact footprint. This option does not meet Building Code requirements in regard to exiting for the third story unit and would require reconfiguration of all of the units to allow for exterior access to meet all these requirements. Furthermore, this proposed option is inconsistent with the City's policy which encourages two-story structures in this location. Although the RM-1,500 district

allows building heights of up to 40 feet, the Downtown Specific Plan generally supports development lower in height, up to two stories/30 feet, as indicated by the following Specific Plan policy:

Land Use Policy #15: Initiate an amendment to Municipal Code Chapter 18.84 to limit building height in all residential zoning districts in the Downtown (including future Planned Unit Development Districts) to not more than two stories and not more than 30 feet.

While this Code amendment has not yet been codified, the intent of this policy is to limit development to two stories. Therefore, Option #3 is not considered to be consistent with the Downtown Specific Plan.

View impacts

The view to the west of Pleasanton Ridge from the adjacent property at 4731 Augustine Street, over the applicant's existing home, is substantially filtered along the front and rear of the property by the existing landscaping, as well as two-story homes and apartments along Harrison Street and Old Bernal Avenue. The Downtown Specific Plan also envisions future development of O (Office) district properties along Old Bernal Avenue and Bernal Court with new office developments, and encourages development and massing to the rear of residentially zoned properties, as proposed. Weighing the competing interests of the applicant's desire to construct additional units and protection of the neighbors' existing views can be very difficult. In this case, staff believes that Option #2 is reasonably sensitive in protecting views from 4731 Augustine Street, but that Option #1 best achieves the intent of the Downtown Design Guidelines and is superior from a design standpoint..

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of this application was sent to surrounding property owners and tenants within 1,000 feet of the site. In addition, because this is a residential project in the Downtown Specific Plan Area, the City sent notices to the Pleasanton Heritage Association and Downtown Improvement Association. Staff has provided the location and noticing maps as Exhibit D for the Commission's reference. At the time this report was prepared, staff had received no written comments.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Apartment buildings of 6 units or fewer are categorically exempt (Class 3) from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Therefore, no environmental document accompanies this report.

CONCLUSION

Options #1 and #2 have been designed to meet all of the RM-1,500 site development standards as well as the Downtown Design Guidelines; however staff believes that only Option #1 provides appropriate architecture and materials in relationship to the existing

neighborhood. Staff acknowledges that Option #2, which shifts the second-story massing towards the rear of the property, helps to protect the existing views from 4731 Augustine Street more effectively than under Option #1; however, the design does not meet the goals and guidelines of the Downtown Specific Plan because it includes an awkwardly extended unit above the garage entries that does not replicate the design rhythm of the surrounding homes, as required within the Downtown Design Guidelines. To bring Option #2 into conformance with the Downtown Design Guidelines if Option #2 is selected, staff recommends that the applicant reduce all three units in size to eliminate (or substantially reduce) the extended portion of the structure to fit above the first floor foot print. Although not recommended, staff has provided draft conditions of approval for Option #2, including reducing the unit size to eliminate (or substantially reduce) the extended portion of the structure to fit above the first floor foot print. While some views from private property may be adversely affected, staff believes that the originally proposed Option #1 is the most architecturally cohesive and attractive design, and that it most closely achieves the intent of the Downtown Design Guidelines and recommends Option #1 for approval.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve Option #1, dated "Received" July 13, 2015 and revised plan sheets A201 and A101, dated "Received" July 22, 2015, for Case No. P15-0290, subject to the conditions listed in Exhibit A.

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