



Planning Commission Staff Report

July 22, 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 the 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](#)
- B. [Plans](#) and [Green Building Checklist](#) dated "July 13, 2015"
- C. [Progression of Architectural Design](#)
- D. [Location and Noticing Map](#)

BACKGROUND

A single-family dwelling was constructed on the subject site in 1959 and is currently being rented. Alok Ventures LLC, the property owner, has applied for design review approval to construct three apartment units (in two buildings), six garage parking spaces, and related site improvements behind the existing dwelling. Design Review applications of this nature are subject to review and approval by the Planning Commission.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The project site is a 7,497-square foot lot (approximately 50' wide x 150' deep) located Downtown at 4745 Augustine St., north of Old Bernal Ave. The site is generally flat and contains a single-family dwelling, uncovered parking, and a corrugated metal storage

shed in the rear of the property. The existing home measures 938 square feet and is one-story (13'-3") in height. The site and its surroundings are shown in Figure 1. Existing site photos showing the residence and rear shed are provided in Figure 2.

Figure 1: Subject Site Location



Figure 2: Site Photos



Existing residence fronting Augustine St.



Rear shed proposed for removal

The site is surrounded by residential and office commercial uses, which is typical of many residential properties located Downtown. There are one-story single-family homes on the north and south side of the subject site and one- to two-story multi-family apartments to the rear (west), fronting Harrison Street. An office building is located across from the property, on the east side of Augustine Street. The rest of the block

contains both single- and multi-family residential uses, in one- and two-story configurations.

Development on the project site is governed by the following land use designations and regulations:

- General Plan: The General Plan land use designation is High Density Residential, which allows residential densities of over 8 dwelling units per acre.
- Downtown Specific Plan and Design Guidelines: The subject property is located within the Downtown Specific Plan Area. The Downtown Specific Plan land use designation for the property is also High Density Residential, which allows residential densities of over 8 dwelling units per acre. Given its location, the site is also subject to the Downtown Design Guidelines.
- Zoning: The site is zoned Multi-Family Residential (RM-1,500), Downtown Revitalization, and Core Area Overlay and is subject to the development standards of each district. The Core Area Overlay District provides modified development standards for smaller multi-family rental housing projects, such as the one proposed, that supersede some of the requirements of the RM-1,500 District. These requirements are discussed further in the Analysis section below.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes to add three units, in two buildings, behind the existing dwelling on the site. All four units would be rental housing. The project also includes improvements to the existing home’s interior and related site improvements, specifically the provision of garage parking, fencing, open space, and landscaping. The existing metal storage shed would be removed in order to accommodate the proposed project.

Site Plan and Project Data

As proposed, Building 1 includes one 1-bedroom unit (Unit A) over a 3-car garage, directly behind the existing home. Building 2 includes two 2-bedroom units (Units B and C) over a 3-car garage at the rear of the lot. Floor area totals are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Project Data

<i>Project Component</i>	<i>sq. ft.</i>
Existing Home	938
Proposed Unit A (1-bdrm)	651
Proposed Unit B (2-bdrm)	829
Proposed Unit C (2-bdrm)	829
<i>Subtotal Residential Area</i>	3,247
Total Floor Area	3,412

Note: Total floor area includes mechanical and trash rooms and excludes garage areas.

All four units would have vehicular access to the site via the existing drive aisle, which is proposed to be reconstructed with permeable pavers. Six parking spaces are proposed to serve all four units. A mailbox for each unit would be located in the front yard adjacent to the sidewalk. Trash receptacles for all four units would be located in Building 2 and screened from street views.

Architectural Design and Building Massing

Building 1's massing would be squarish with a gable roof similar to and in line with the roof form at the front of the existing home. A balcony on the rear (west) elevation would extend 5 feet out from the building plane. The massing for Building 2 is more articulated. The second story would step back and in, and the roof design includes both side and front gables, which creates more variety in the design and breaks up the squarish massing. Both buildings are proposed to have light grey horizontal smooth lap siding, white vinyl windows, and grey concrete roof tiles. Both buildings are proposed to be nearly 22 feet in height.

The existing home would be modified as part of the proposed project. Improvements include: redesigning the interior layout and reducing the number of bedrooms from three to two; removing windows to allow for privacy and to accommodate fire prevention requirements; and designating and fencing private open space. No other exterior improvements, such as to colors or materials, are proposed for the existing dwelling.

Landscape Plan and Fencing

There is limited existing landscaping on the site. No trees greater than 6 inches in diameter would be removed as a result of the proposed project, though some smaller shrubs and trees would be removed. The dripline of the large tree on the adjacent property to the south would not be affected by the proposed project.

A landscape plan includes low plantings in landscape strips around the perimeter of the site and along the north and south frontages of the new buildings. Horsetail reeds (*equisetum hyemale*) and Dwarf Pink Kangaroo Paw (*anigozanthos "pink joey"*) are proposed along the drive aisles and front yard, and would be the plantings most visible from Augustine Street.

New 6-foot high redwood privacy fences are proposed in the side yards of Units B and C and in the rear yard (between the two units) to separate and create privacy in the open space areas for each unit. A 4-foot high slatted redwood fence is also proposed to delineate the open space area for the existing home. The existing fence along the perimeter of the site is proposed to remain.

ANALYSIS

The proposed project conforms with the requirements of the General Plan, Downtown Specific Plan, and Zoning Ordinance, and the architecture is consistent with the Design Guidelines as detailed below and in Table 2.

Table 2: City Requirements vs. Proposed Project

Site Development Standard	City Requirement per RM-1,500 and Core Area Overlay	Proposed Project
<i>Residential Density</i>	1 unit/1,500 sq. ft.	1 unit/1,874 sq. ft.
<i>Floor Area Ratio</i>	50% maximum	46%
<i>Building Height</i>		
Per Code Rule of Measurement*	40 feet maximum	19.25 feet maximum
Grade to Top Ridge of Roof Measurement	--	22 feet maximum
<i>Setbacks</i>		
Front (east)	15 feet minimum	16 feet (existing home)
Side (north)	5 feet	13 feet (Building 1) 6 feet (Building 2)
Side (south)	5 feet	6 feet (Buildings 1 & 2) (existing home is 4'-8")
Rear (west)	10 feet minimum	10 feet (Building 2)
<i>Open Space</i>		
Private	1-bdrm units: 75 sq. ft. minimum 2- or more bdrm units: 50 sq. ft. per bdrm minimum	Unit A (1-bdrm): 100 sq. ft. Unit B (2-bdrm): 330 sq. ft. Unit C (2-bdrm): 298 sq. ft. Existing home (2-bdrm): 121 sq. ft.
Group	None	None
<i>Parking</i>		
Private	1.5 spaces per 1- or 2-bedroom unit (i.e., 6 spaces minimum for proposed project)	6 garage spaces
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.*

Uses

The Downtown Specific Plan includes Design and Beautification Policy #16 which seeks to enhance the charm and diversity of the West Side neighborhood around Rose Avenue by encouraging second units in the rear of existing homes and the construction of duplexes instead of multi-story apartment buildings. According to Chapter 18.36.030(C) of the Pleasanton Municipal Code (PMC), the RM-1,500 district allows multi-family dwellings in a combination of attached, detached, and duplex units. Additionally, the purpose of the Core Area Overlay includes facilitating the development of smaller multi-family rental housing projects (10 units or less), such as the proposed project, by allowing for modification of standard requirements.

Based on the General Plan, Specific Plan, and Zoning Ordinance designations and requirements applicable to the site, multi-family residential uses configured in separate buildings are an appropriate use on the site. The proposed units are relatively small compared with other units currently being developed in the City of Pleasanton with a similar number of bedrooms. As a result, although the rental rates of these units are not yet known, they can be expected to be more affordable than larger apartment units with similar characteristics.

Site Plan and Density

The appropriate density of properties designated as High Density Residential in the General Plan is determined case-by-case (within a minimum of 8 units/acre), based on site characteristics and proposed amenities. Construction of the project as proposed would result in a total of four units and 3,412 square feet of floor area on a 7,497 square-foot lot, resulting in a density of 23 dwelling units per acre and an FAR of 46%. The proposed project meets the setback and building envelope requirements of the Core Area Overlay (within an underlying RM district). Open space is provided in the form of at-grade landscape and hardscape areas in the front and rear yards for the existing home and Units B and C, respectively, and in a second floor balcony for Unit A. Therefore, as proposed, the project complies with the development standards required for the site, as identified in Table 2.

Staff finds the site layout to be functional and sensitive to adjacent residential properties. The project would provide additional rental housing Downtown, while generally maintaining the existing streetscape along Augustine Street, and an older single-family home would be improved.

Staff believes that the proposed development meets the purposes of the Core Area Overlay District: the one-story front dwelling would be retained and the new units would be placed at the rear of the lot; on-site parking would be located off of a single driveway, thus reducing paving and maintaining on-street parking opportunities; and the proposed building height and separation of the new buildings from other neighboring structures would allow the project to blend in with the surrounding development, particularly to the rear of the site, including adjacent two-story uses on Harrison Street.

Moreover, staff believes that the density proposed for the site is appropriate based on the compact site planning, building height of 22 feet, and architectural design and building articulation. The project design would ensure that the proposed residences are compatible with apartments and single-family homes in the vicinity of the site and in Downtown as a whole.

Architectural Design

The Downtown Design Guidelines recommend the use of traditional materials, finishes, colors, and detailing. Specific Downtown Design Guidelines that pertain to the proposed project include:

- Duplex or triplex units behind single-family homes are to match the materials, elements, and architectural style of the front home.¹ Single-story units are preferred where feasible.²
- Transition from multi-story, multi-family housing to adjacent single story single-family homes can be made with stepping down of building forms. Dormers, articulated chimneys and stairways, landscaping, architectural molding, and window bays that reduce the mass of the building wall can also be helpful.
- Multiple Family housing complexes should be designed to follow the rhythm and scale of the surrounding homes.
- Duplexes or triplexes located behind single-family homes are preferred over large-scale structures to maintain the small-town character of Downtown neighborhoods and to retain the single-family residential streetscape.
- The architectural style of the development should match an existing style in the immediate neighborhood. If many styles exist, select the one which is most appropriate for the development.
- New construction is to use a rich variety of detailing appropriate to the style of the building and that found in similar homes in the neighborhood. This includes elements such as roof eave, door and window trim, balconies, railings, and material accents such as tile or shingle patterns.

Staff finds the architectural form, horizontal lap siding, window treatments, and colors to be generally consistent with the guidelines. The applicant has provided relief to the massing, through articulation, gable roof forms, window penetrations, and balconies on all building elevations that are appropriate for the neighborhood and that provide sufficient visual interest from the street. The grey and white colors of the siding and windows complement the existing home and the mix of cool and natural tones in the vicinity.

In order to establish more cohesive architectural design and detailing, staff has included the following Conditions of Approval, as shown in Exhibit A:

¹ Components of the existing home, including the vertical siding, colors, and combination of architectural details, do not exemplify the high-quality level of design sought by the Design Guidelines. As a result, staff encouraged the applicant to look at materials, details, and architectural styles from the larger neighborhood for inspiration in order to comply with this Guideline.

² Single-story units were not feasible on the subject site given parking and other site requirements. The applicant prepared multiple site plan configurations before arriving at the proposed site plan, which staff believes meets the intent of the Design Guidelines and code requirements, while providing three additional units of rental housing.

- #6 requires that the applicant revise the balustrade design on the balconies and exterior staircases to be more consistent with the character of the proposed architecture;
- #7 requires the applicant to provide recessed windows, as encouraged by the Downtown Design Guidelines; and
- #8 requires the applicant to add additional detailing to the garage doors, such as with windows or a “carriage style” design.

Overall, staff believes that the architectural style of the buildings is attractive and appropriate for the Downtown and that the project, subject to the Conditions of Approval in Exhibit B, complies with the Downtown Design Guidelines, and would complement the existing buildings on Augustine Street and other areas Downtown.

Building Massing and Height

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 made, the intent of this policy is to limit development to two stories. The gable roof forms on the new buildings extend down toward neighboring properties and the existing home on the subject site, creating a transition between one- and two-story residences. The larger of the two buildings, Building 2, is located at the rear of the property where it would be less visible from the public street and neighboring properties, and where it would be compatible with the one- and two-story properties on Harrison Street.

The applicant has erected story poles with orange netting to simulate the height and mass of the proposed buildings, as shown in the photographs in Figure 3. The proposed project is anticipated to have minimal effects on sightlines from the west (i.e., Harrison Street), north, and south (see right-hand photo below, depicting the view from Old Bernal Ave.). It would have some effects on the views of ridgelines and open sky from certain locations along Augustine Street east of the project (especially where there are no mature trees), as shown in the left-hand photo below. However, given the narrow width of the lot and the related building massing, and the building height which is found to be compatible with the existing dwelling and the surrounding neighborhood, the project is not anticipated to have a significant detrimental effect on views from the street.

Figure 3: Site Photos of Story Poles Depicting Building Height & Massing



View from east side of Augustine Street



View from Old Bernal Ave. (street in front of Library parking lot)

Staff believes that the 22-foot building height and massing are appropriate for the small lot on which the project is located, consistent with the Zoning and Specific Plan development standards, and compatible with the neighboring parcels and the surrounding neighborhood.

Green Building

Multi-family projects are subject to the City's Green Building Ordinance (Chapter 17.50 of the PMC) and must achieve a "green home" rating of 50 points on the BuildItGreen's Multi-family Checklist. The "GreenPoint Rated Checklist" for the proposed project is provided as Exhibit C and identifies 60 points, which exceeds the overall 50-point minimum for a multi-family residential project and meets or exceeds the minimum points required for each category in the checklist. The State's Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen) will also apply to the proposed development and is similar to the green building measures that the City's Green Building Ordinance currently requires.

Growth Management Allocations

The proposed project would require Growth Management Allocations. If the project is approved by the Planning Commission, the applicant would need to apply for Growth Management Allocations which would be issued by the City Zoning Administrator or City Council. Staff anticipates that there would be adequate building permit capacity for the three new units.

Parking

In the Core Overlay District, 1- and 2-bedroom apartment units are required to provide 1.5 parking spaces per unit. No guest parking spaces are required, though parking would be available on-street on Augustine Street. These requirements result in a parking requirement of 6 spaces total, which the project meets by providing 6 garage spaces—3 spaces in each new building. Note that the tenant in the existing home would

park in the garage in Building 1. Vehicular circulation is designed to allow for a backing-up distance of 25 feet, consistent with PMC requirements.

Grading and Drainage

Grading for the proposed project would be limited to the preparation of the building pads and foundations, driveway, and the installation of any below-ground utilities, such as electrical conduits, sewer, and water infrastructure. Stormwater from the proposed roof areas of the project would be conveyed to landscape areas for treatment and pervious pavers would be used on the driveway and parking access areas to reduce untreated stormwater runoff to the City's storm drain system.

Design Progression

City staff worked with the applicant 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. The initial submittal, shown in Exhibit D, was three stories and too massive and out of character with the neighborhood to meet the City's design review criteria. The proposal did 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. 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.

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 C for the Commission's reference. At the time this report was prepared, staff had received the following comments related to this project proposal: (1) an inquiry about how to rent one of the proposed units; (2) an inquiry about zoning requirements on a nearby lot and whether a similar proposal would be feasible; and (3) a request to review the plans and concern from an adjacent property owner about the lack of parking and about windows facing onto his property.

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

The proposed development 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 with a relatively small narrow lot, staff believes the applicant has proposed an attractive multi-family residential project. Staff also finds that the architectural style of the apartments is appropriate for Downtown and that the buildings would complement the existing buildings on Augustine Street and in the surrounding neighborhood.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve P15-0290 subject to the conditions listed in Exhibit A.

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