

DEPARTMENT OF  
CITY PLANNING

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

SAMANTHA MILLMAN  
PRESIDENT

VAHID KHORSAND  
VICE-PRESIDENT

DAVID H. J. AMBROZ

CAROLINE CHOE

RENEE DAKE WILSON

KAREN MACK

MARC MITCHELL

VERONICA PADILLA-CAMPOS

DANA M. PERLMAN

ROCKY WILES  
COMMISSION OFFICE MANAGER  
(213) 978-1300

CITY OF LOS ANGELES  
CALIFORNIA



ERIC GARCETTI  
MAYOR

EXECUTIVE OFFICES  
200 N. SPRING STREET, ROOM 525  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012-4801

VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP  
DIRECTOR  
(213) 978-1271

KEVIN J. KELLER, AICP  
EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
(213) 978-1272

LISA M. WEBBER, AICP  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
(213) 978-1274

<http://planning.lacity.org>

November 6, 2018

Carl Steinberg (A)  
ETCO Homes  
8447 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 400  
Beverly Hills, CA 90211

Sweetzer Development, LLC (O)  
8447 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 400  
Beverly Hills, CA 90211

Eric Liberman (R)  
QES, Inc.  
14549 Archwood Street  
Van Nuys, CA 91405

RE: Case No. ENV-2018-2721-CE  
Related Case(s): VTT- 74129-CN; DIR-2018-  
2720-WDI; DIR-2014-4672-DB  
Address(s): 714 – 718 North Sweetzer Avenue  
Hollywood Planning Area  
Zone : [Q]R3-1  
D. M. : 141B173  
C. D. : 5

**RE: ENV-2018-2721-CE (Categorical Exemption - Class 32)**

The subject property is a relatively flat, rectangular-shaped interior parcel of land comprised of two contiguous lots consisting of approximately 14,612 square feet of lot area having a frontage of 85 feet along the east side of North Sweetzer Avenue and a frontage of 170 feet along the north side of an alley. The subject property is zoned [Q]R3-1 within the Hollywood Community Plan Area with a Medium Residential land use designation. The subject site has a Height District 1 designation that establishes a height limit of 45 feet and restricts any the floor area ratio of the development to a maximum of three to one. The subject property is also located within the Transit Priority Area in the City of Los Angeles (ZI-2452) and the Melrose Zone Change Permanent [Q] Conditions (ZI-2381).

The subject property is currently under construction, but was previously occupied by multi-family residential apartment buildings that were demolished in 2017. The applicant is requesting a Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. 74129-CN the merger and resubdivision of two (2) lots into one (1) lot in conjunction with the construction, use, and maintenance of a proposed five-story multi-family residential building a maximum height of 56 feet containing 26 residential condominium units. The project will include 44 residential automobile parking spaces located on two

subterranean levels. The project also includes 26 long-term and three (3) short-term bicycle parking spaces. In addition to the request for a Vesting Tentative Tract Map, the applicant is also requesting a Waiver of Dedication and Improvements to waive a three (3) –foot highway dedication along Sweetzer Avenue, a two (2) –foot street widening along Swetzer Avenue, and a two and one-half (2.5) –foot alley widening.

The zoning and land use designation of the project site permits a maximum residential density of one dwelling unit per 800 square feet of lot area in areas designated for Medium Residential Land Uses. As such, a maximum of 19 residential units would be allowed on the project site. However, the building that is currently under construction was approved for a Density Bonus pursuant to Case No. DIR-2014-4762-DB to allow for a maximum density of 26 units along with a maximum building height of 56 feet and a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 3.971:1.

Surrounding uses are within the [Q]R3-1, R2-1XL, and C4-1XL Zones and are generally developed with single-family residences, multi-family residential buildings, and commercial buildings. The property abutting the subject property to the north is zoned [Q]R3-1 and is developed a single- two-story multi-family residential apartment building. Properties abutting the subject property to the east are zoned R2-1XL and developed with duplexes. The property abutting the subject property to the south, across the alley, in zoned C4-1XL and developed with a three-story commercial building. Properties to the west, across Sweetzer Avenue, are zoned [Q]R3-1 and developed with a three-story multi-family residential buildings.

The proposed project would not have a significant effect on the environment. A “significant effect on the environment” is defined as “a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in the environment) (CEQA Guidelines, Public Resources Code Section 21068). The proposed project and potential impacts were analyzed in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines and the City’s L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide. These two documents establish guidelines and thresholds of significant impact, and provide the data for determining whether or not the impacts of a proposed project reach or exceed those thresholds. Analysis of the proposed Project determined that it is Categorical Exempt from environmental review pursuant to Article III, Section I, and Class 32 of the CEQA Guidelines. The Class 32 Exemption is intended to promote infill development within urbanized areas.

The proposed project qualifies for a Categorical Exemption because it conforms to the definition of “In-fill Projects” as follows:

- (a) The project is consistent with the applicable general plan designation and all applicable general plan policies as well as with applicable zoning designation and regulations:**

The project site is located within the adopted Hollywood Community Plan area, and is designated for Medium Residential land uses corresponding to the R3 Zone. The property is zoned [Q]R3-1. This permits a maximum residential density of one dwelling unit per 800 square feet of lot area in areas designated for Medium Residential Land Uses and the overall required minimum lot size is 5,000 square feet. The proposed density of 26 dwelling units on an approximately 14,612 square-foot lot is greater than what is allowed under the [Q]R3-1 Zone, however the building that is currently under construction was approved for a Density Bonus pursuant to Case No. DIR-2014-4762-DB to allow for a maximum density of 26 units along with a maximum building height of 56 feet and a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 3.971:1. As proposed, the project would comply with all other applicable regulations of the Zoning Code.

Consistent with the Community Plan, the proposed 26-unit condominium development would add new, multi-family housing to Los Angeles' housing supply, in a neighborhood which is conveniently located to a variety of community services.

**(b) The proposed development occurs within city limits on a project site of no more than five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses:**

The subject property is located in a highly urbanized area within the Hollywood Community Plan Area. The subject property is comprised of two lots with a total of approximately 15,006 square feet of lot area (0.34 acres), which is well within the five-acre threshold. The subject property is substantially surrounded by urban uses. The entire site is surrounded by properties which are similarly zoned [Q]R3-1, R2-1XL, and C4-1XL and are generally developed with single-family residences, multi-family residential buildings, and commercial buildings. The property abutting the subject property to the north is zoned [Q]R3-1 and is developed a single- a two-story multi-family residential apartment building. Properties abutting the subject property to the east are zoned R2-1XL and developed with duplexes. The property abutting the subject property to the south, across the alley, is zoned C4-1XL and developed with a three-story commercial building. Properties to the west, across Sweetzer Avenue, are zoned [Q]R3-1 and developed with a three-story multi-family residential buildings.

**(c) The project site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species:**

The project is located within an established, fully developed, medium-density residential area in proximity to large boulevards and other large employment centers. The project site has no value as a habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species. Furthermore no protected trees are present on the project site or on any of the surrounding properties immediately adjacent to the property lines.

**(d) Approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality:**

*Traffic*

The proposed project involves the construction, use, and maintenance of a new four-story, 26-unit condominium building with ground floor and subterranean parking. Based upon the existing mobility and circulation networks in direct proximity to the proposed project, the introduction of 26 units to the community will result in no traffic impacts. The project will generate well under 500 daily trips, which is the established CEQA threshold. Furthermore, the project falls under the 36 unit threshold established by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (DOT) for the preparation of a traffic impact study. Based on the trip factor of 0.7 trips per unit for condominium projects defined in the LADOT Transportation Referral Form, the proposed project would generate approximately 18 trips during peak hours. The project will generate well under 500 daily trips, which is the established CEQA threshold.

*Noise*

The project must comply with the adopted City of Los Angeles Noise Ordinances Nos. 144,331 and 161,574, as well as any subsequent Ordinances, which prohibit the emission or creation of noise beyond certain levels. These Ordinances cover both operational noise

levels (i.e., post-construction), and any construction noise impacts. As a result of this mandatory compliance, the proposed project will not result in any significant noise impacts.

#### *Air Quality*

The building construction phase includes the construction of the proposed building on the subject property, connection of utilities, laying irrigation for landscaping, architectural coatings, paving, and landscaping the subject property. These construction activities would temporarily create emissions of dusts, fumes, equipment exhaust, and other air contaminants. Construction activities involving grading and foundation preparation would primarily generate PM2.5 and PM10 emissions. Mobile sources (such as diesel-fueled equipment onsite and traveling to and from the project site) would primarily generate NOx emissions. The application of architectural coatings would result primarily in the release of ROG emissions. The amount of emissions generated on a daily basis would vary, depending on the amount and types of construction activities occurring at the same time.

Nevertheless, appropriate dust control measures would be implemented as part of the proposed project during each phase of development, as required by SCAQMD Rule 403 - Fugitive Dust. Specifically, Rule 403 control requirements include, but are not limited to, applying water in sufficient quantities to prevent the generation of visible dust plumes, applying soil binders to uncovered areas, reestablishing ground cover as quickly as possible, utilizing a wheel washing system to remove bulk material from tires and vehicle undercarriages before vehicles exit the Project Site, and maintaining effective cover over exposed areas.

Best Management Practices (BMP) will be implemented that would include (but not be limited to) the following:

- Unpaved demolition and construction areas shall be wetted at least three times daily during excavation and construction, and temporary dust covers shall be used to reduce emissions and meets SCAQMD Rule 403;
- All dirt/soil loads shall be secured by trimming, watering or other appropriate means to prevent spillage and dust;
- General contractors shall maintain and operate construction equipment to minimize exhaust emissions; and
- Trucks shall not idle but be turned off.

The proposed project, which is replacing three previously demolished multi-family residences with 26 residential condos would result in a net increase of 12 dwelling units on the subject property. Possible project-related air quality concerns will derive from the mobile source emissions generated from the proposed residential uses for the project site. Operational emissions for project-related traffic will be less than significant. In addition to mobile sources from vehicles, general development causes smaller amounts of "area source" air pollution to be generated from on-site energy consumption (natural gas combustion) and from off-site electrical generation. These sources represent a small percentage of the total pollutants. The inclusion of such emissions adds negligibly to the total significant project-related emissions burden generated by the proposed project. The proposed project will not cause the SCAQMD's recommended threshold levels to be exceeded. Operational emission impacts will be at a less-than-significant level.

*Water Quality*

The development of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to water quality. The project is not adjacent to any water sources and construction of the project will not create any impact to water quality. Furthermore, the project will comply with the City's stormwater management provisions per LAMC 64.70.

**(e) The site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services:**

The proposed project can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services. The project site will be adequately served by all required public utilities and services given that the site is currently and adequately served by the City's Department of Water and Power, the City's Bureau of Sanitation, the Southern California (SoCal) Gas Company, the Los Angeles Police Department, the Los Angeles Fire Department, Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles Public Library, and other public services. In addition, the California Green Code requires new construction to meet stringent efficiency standards for both water and power, such as high-efficiency toilets, dual-flush water closets, minimum irrigation standards, LED lighting, etc. As a result of these new building codes, which are required of all projects, it can be anticipated that the proposed project will not create any impact on existing utilities and public services through the merger and re-subdivision of two lots into one ground lot and 26 condominium units, in conjunction with the development of a 26-unit multi-family residential building. Based on the facts herein, it can be found that the project meets the qualifications of the Class 32 Exemption.

Exceptions to the use of Categorical Exemptions:

Planning staff evaluated the exceptions to the use of Categorical Exemptions for the proposed project listed in "CEQA Guidelines" Section 15300.2 and determined that none of the exceptions apply to the proposed project as described below:

- A. *Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located -- a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.*

N/A: The project has been issued a Class 32 Exemption.

- B. *Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.*

The development of the project site with 26 dwelling units is consistent with the zone and land use designation of the site, as designated by the Hollywood Community Plan. The Community Plan's designation of the site for medium residential density and uses was completed in anticipation of environmental impacts based on the maximum allowable density for the project site and the surrounding area. The proposed project is not requesting any deviations from what is otherwise permitted by the underlying zoning of the site or what was previously granted under Case No. DIR-2014-4763-DB. Similarly, other by-right projects in the surrounding area would have been analyzed for their environmental impacts during the preparation of the Community Plan and are not subject to further CEQA review. Any project proposing to deviate from the Community Plan and

underlying zone would require a CEQA clearance and impacts would be mitigated for the project individually.

A successive project of the same type and nature would reflect a development that is consistent with the underlying land use designation and Los Angeles Municipal Code. Any such project would be subject to Regulatory Compliance Measures (RCMs), which require compliance with the City of Los Angeles Noise Ordinance; pollutant discharge, building code and regulated construction methods, dewatering, stormwater mitigations; and Best Management Practices for stormwater runoff. These RCMs will reduce potential impacts to less than significant and would, therefore, not create a cumulative impact.

- C. Significant Effect Due to Unusual Circumstances. *A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.*

The project proposes the merger and re-subdivision of two lots into one ground lot and 26 condominium units, in conjunction with the development of a 26-unit multi-family residential building. The subject property is substantially surrounded by urban uses. The entire site is surrounded by properties which are similarly zoned [Q]R3-1, R2-1XL, and C4-1XL and are generally developed with single-family residences, multi-family residential buildings, and commercial buildings. The property abutting the subject property to the north is zoned [Q]R3-1 and is developed a single- a two-story multi-family residential apartment building. Properties abutting the subject property to the east are zoned R2-1XL and developed with duplexes. The property abutting the subject property to the south, across the alley, in zoned C4-1XL and developed with a three-story commercial building. Properties to the west, across Sweetzer Avenue, are zoned [Q]R3-1 and developed with a three-story multi-family residential buildings. There are no special districts or other known circumstances that indicate a special or sensitive surrounding environment. Thus, there are no unusual circumstances which may lead to a significant effect on the environment.

- D. Scenic Highway. *A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.*

Based on a review of the California Scenic Highway Mapping System (<http://www.dot.ca.gov/design/lap/livability/scenic-highways/>), the subject site is not located along a State Scenic Highway, nor are there any designated State Scenic Highways located near the project site. Based on this, the proposed project will not result in damage to scenic resources including trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway, and this exception does not apply.

- E. Hazardous Waste Site. *A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.*

This exception does not apply to the proposed project. The project site is not listed as a hazardous waste site on EnviroStor, California's data management system for tracking hazardous waste sites. Additionally, the subject property is in a well-established residential neighborhood, and the surrounding area has long been developed with urban residential

uses. Hazardous waste and materials would not be expected to pose a significant constraint on sites long developed with such uses. Although there is the potential for asbestos and/or lead-based paint to be present in the existing buildings to be demolished due to their age, removal of such materials is subject to standard safety requirements and would not classify the project site as a hazardous waste site.

Additionally, the project site is not located within a Hazardous Waste/Border Zone, Airport Hazard area, Coastal Zone, or a BOE Special Grading Area. There are no oils, elevators, in-ground hydrologic systems, monitoring or water supply wells, or above- or below-ground storage tanks, or potentially fluid-filled electrical equipment on or immediately adjacent to the project site. No industrial wastewater is generated on the project site and sanitary wastewater is discharged to the City Bureau of Sanitation. Therefore, this exception for a Class 32 Categorical Exemption does not apply to this project.

- F. Historical Resources. *A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.*

The subject property is currently under construction with a 26-unit multi-family residential building, and was previously developed with two apartment buildings. The immediate surrounding area consists of a mix of single- and multi-family residences and commercial buildings. None of the previous structures on the subject property were identified through the SurveyLA database, and the project site is not located in a designated Historic Preservation Overlay Zone. The project site is also not identified in any state or national register of historic resources. Subsequently, the applicant received a Demolition Permit on October 12, 2017 to clear the site for the proposed project. For these reasons, the proposed project would not constitute a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historic resource as defined by CEQA, and this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

Conclusion:

There is no evidence that the proposed project will have a specific adverse impact. A "specific adverse impact" is defined as, "a Significant, quantifiable, direct and unavoidable impact, based on objective, identified written public health or safety standards, policies, or conditions as they existed on the date the application was deemed complete" (LAMC Section 12.22.A.25(b)). The proposed project and potential impacts were analyzed in accordance with the City's Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines and the City's L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide. These two documents establish guidelines and thresholds of significant impact, and provide the data for determining whether or not the impacts of a proposed Project reach or exceed those thresholds. Analysis of the proposed project determined that it is Categorically Exempt from environmental review pursuant to Article 19, Section 15332 (Class 32) of the City of Los Angeles CEQA Guidelines. The Class 32 exemption is intended to promote infill development within urbanized areas.