

PROPOSED LAND USE FINDINGS

1. GENERAL PLAN FINDINGS

The action is in substantial conformance with the purposes, intent and provisions of the General Plan. (Charter Section 556)

The General Plan sets forth goals, objectives, policies and programs that provide a guideline for day-to-day land use actions to meet the existing and future needs and desires of the communities within the City of Los Angeles, while integrating a range of state-mandated elements, including Transportation, Noise, Safety, and Conservation. The requested amendment of the Harbor Gateway Community Plan (“Community Plan”) from Heavy Industrial to Neighborhood Commercial with a Height District designation of 2 is compatible with the broad goals, objectives and policies of the General Plan as follows. It serves a transition to commercial uses on Sepulveda Boulevard between Western Avenue and Normandie Avenue (the “Sepulveda Corridor”); The request puts focus on the relationship of the Property, located at the end of a cul-de-sac with only an outlet to Sepulveda Boulevard, to the Sepulveda Corridor and not to the industrial area further north. It allows for apartments as a housing alternative to existing single family dwellings thereby supporting a more diverse range of housing choices including residential apartment housing. It allows the placement of multi-family housing within walking distance of the commercial uses along the Sepulveda Corridor and in close proximity to transit and Freeway access; The requested C2-2 Zone which is necessary to facilitate development of the residential Project. These changes will allow residential uses consistent with the objectives and policies of the General Plan, as detailed below.

Framework Element

The Framework Element (the “Framework”) of the General Plan, adopted by City Council on December 11, 1996 and re-adopted on August 8, 2001, provides guidance regarding policy issues for the entire City of Los Angeles. The Framework also sets forth a Citywide comprehensive long-range growth strategy and defines Citywide policies regarding land use, housing, urban form, neighborhood design, open space, economic development, transportation, infrastructure, and public services. By enabling the construction of additional housing units in close proximity to existing employment and commercial services, the zone change and associated General Plan amendment/designation, will be consistent with several goals and policies of the Framework.

The Framework is unequivocal as to the demand for housing:

“Housing production has not kept pace with the demand for housing.” (Framework, Chapter 4, Summary of Housing Issues)

The cause of much of that unmet demand reflects an inadequate supply of vacant land planned for residential development. The Framework recognizes the need to repurpose vacant land where there is insufficient market demand for uses intended by Community Plans. In the Harbor Gateway Community Plan Area, 41 percent of the area is planned for industrial use and this constrains the ability of the remaining residential area to accommodate housing demand. In most other community plans, less than 10 percent of the area is planned for industrial use. The

substantial development of retail uses and commercial services in the Sepulveda Corridor, despite its Heavy Industrial Land Use designation, shows a lack of market demand and thus overabundance of industrial land in this community. As a consequence of too few vacant properties zoned for residential use and too much property planned for industrial use, the subject Property has remained vacant for approximately 15 years. The Framework discusses these very issues:

“Currently, the City of Los Angeles has insufficient vacant properties to accommodate the cumulative amount of population growth which has been forecasted. The supply of land zoned for residential development is the most constrained in the context of population growth forecasts. Thus, should growth and new development in the City occur, most likely it will require the recycling and/or intensification of existing developed properties or conversion of certain uses, where there is insufficient market demand, to an alternative use.” (Framework, Chapter 4, Summary of Housing Issues)

The Framework also points out that where residential development often occurs, the units are small and usable open space is insufficient:

“Existing units often do not meet the needs of potential residents because the units are small (in number of rooms) and lack usable open space. A concentration of large households in many communities suggests the need for an increased supply of larger housing units.” (Framework, Chapter 4, Summary of Housing Issues)

To those ends, the Project provides 352 two- and three-bedroom dwelling units with a range of floor areas from 980 square feet to 1,423 square feet. The requested height district change would permit these units to be an average of approximately 1,266 square feet each, rather than restricted to approximately 949 square feet each based upon a floor area ratio of 1.5:1. The provision of approximately 119,148 square feet of open space will far exceed the approximately 35,925 square feet of open space required by the Municipal Code. Open space provided includes private open space, courtyard, club house, roof deck, community room, fitness center and ground floor yards.

The Project also responds to the lack of a jobs/housing balance. While there is an abundance of employment in the community, housing opportunities are largely limited to existing single family dwellings. Few vacant single family lots are available and the Framework generally supports the retention of stable single family neighborhoods. Proximity to rich job centers nearby is limited by the lack of nearby housing opportunities. This contributes to poor air quality in the community as employees of local businesses must find housing farther from their places of employment making for longer commutes, greater congestion on freeways and other main roads resulting in a corresponding increase in carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, hydrocarbons and particulate matter. As stated in the Framework:

“The locational relationship between jobs and housing is an issue in Los Angeles. The distribution and extensive coverage of single-family units throughout the City coupled with their physical separation from commercial services, jobs, recreation, and entertainment necessitates the use of the automobile and results in a high number of generated trips and

distances traveled. This has resulted in increased traffic congestion and air pollution.”
(Framework, Chapter 4, Summary of Housing Issues)

One of the recommended measures to reduce trip generation and promote clean air is to provide housing and employment in close proximity to one another, as proposed here:

“Living in proximity to transit and within mixed-use developments can reduce the number of trips people take in their cars, providing some people with the opportunity to walk between their home, job, and or neighborhood services.” (Framework, Chapter 4, Housing Policy)

To implement the provision of jobs and housing in proximity to one another, the Framework recommends these uses be located in commercially-zoned corridors. While the Sepulveda Corridor is zoned M3, *actual use* is predominantly commercial, reflecting a transition away from industrial uses to neighborhood serving commercial uses including fast food restaurants, financial services and a drug store/pharmacy. Expanding the depth of this commercial corridor to incorporate housing is consistent with the intent of the following Framework policy:

“Improvement of the jobs and housing relationships in sub-areas of the City may be accomplished through the re-use of commercially zoned corridors and development at transit stations which afford the opportunity for the development of a mix of uses, housing, local retail, and offices, and can improve localized jobs and housing relationships.” (Framework, Chapter 4, Housing Policy)

Even where housing is developed, some projects are unaffordable to those with a moderate income. Most residential area in the vicinity of the Property is planned for single family use. The Low Density designation appropriately serves a segment of the population seeking to own a home, but does not serve those who prefer living in an apartment and/or who cannot afford to buy a home. Multi-family housing is largely absent in this area. According to the Framework:

“[s]ome areas of the City have over-concentrations of low-income housing and other areas have very little housing available even to moderate-income families.” (Framework, Chapter 4, Summary of Housing Issues)

The subject apartment Project is anticipated to be affordable at a lower price point than nearby single family homes.

The Project is consistent with the following multi-family residential land use goal and objective in the Framework:

GOAL 3C

“Multi-family neighborhoods that enhance the quality of life for the City's existing and future residents.”

Objective 3.7

“Provide for the stability and enhancement of multi-family residential neighborhoods and allow for growth in areas where there is sufficient public infrastructure and services and the residents' quality of life can be maintained or improved.”

At 5.1 acres, the subject project creates a new micro-neighborhood within approximately 400 feet of older residential uses on the south side of Sepulveda Boulevard and within 700 feet of 78 condominiums constructed in 2009 on the east side of Normandie Avenue. Based upon the analysis performed in the EIR, there is sufficient public infrastructure and services to accommodate the residents who would live and play at the subject development. The Project's setback from Sepulveda Boulevard provides for reduced traffic noise yet proximity to jobs and public transit. The Project's setback from Sepulveda Boulevard and the existence of commercial uses along the north side of Sepulveda Boulevard also provides an appropriate buffer to the single family residential neighborhood south of Sepulveda Boulevard. Numerous stores within walking distance provide opportunities for employment and nearby shopping. These stores and services will benefit from the expansion of local users.

The Framework also recognizes that some land planned for industrial use may be better served if developed for other uses. The Property is more closely aligned and connected to the commercial frontage in the Sepulveda Corridor than to the adjacent industrial properties to the north. In fact, there is no physical access from the Property to those industrial properties as the cul-de-sac providing access to Sepulveda Boulevard dead ends at the Property. Access to the industrially-developed properties is available through Normandie Avenue, 228th Street or Lockness Avenue only. The reduction of 5.1 acres of industrial property from the citywide inventory of approximately 19,000 acres (Los Angeles' Industrial Land: Sustaining a Dynamic City Economy, Appendix B, December 2007, Page 10.) would not adversely the City's ability to accommodate new industrial uses or adversely impact adjacent residential neighborhoods, commercial districts, or other land uses. The proposed request is consistent with several of the criteria for re-designating ~~marginal~~ industrial lands for alternative uses as indicated below. (Framework, Objective 3.14.6)

- o Criterion: *Where the conversion of industrial lands to an alternative use will not create a fragmented pattern of development and reduce the integrity and viability of existing industrial areas.*

Between Normandie Avenue on the east and Western Avenue on the west, the north side of Sepulveda Boulevard is zoned [Q]M2, M2, MR2 and M3 approximately 2,900 lineal feet of frontage. All of these lots are designated as Light Industrial or Heavy Industrial. Notwithstanding these designations, commercial and retail uses occupy approximately 87 percent of this frontage. Only two of the lots are occupied with industrial uses and one lot is vacant. The Property is located immediately north of new retail uses on either side of the cul-de-sac. Approximately 84 percent of the south side of Sepulveda Boulevard designated Low Residential on the Community Plan and zoned R1. These lots were developed in approximately 1968 and 1969 exclusively with single family dwellings that remain. Retail uses on property zoned [Q]C2 occupy the other 16 percent of the frontage. No industrial use takes its access from the cul-de-sac. The Project compliments the emerging pattern of commercial development along the Sepulveda Corridor. Therefore, the Project would not cause any fragmentation of industrial land nor reduce the integrity or viability of existing industrial area. Any fragmentation that may have occurred has

preceded this Project and there is abundant industrial land remaining in the Community Plan area.

- o Criterion: *Where the conversion of industrial lands to an alternative use will not result in an adverse impact on adjacent residential neighborhoods, commercial districts, or other land uses.*

The Property's vacancy for the past 15 years demonstrates the lack of demand for industrial use at this location. In addition, the development of the Sepulveda Corridor in the past decade or more has been exclusively with new retail, restaurant and financial services, despite the Heavy Industrial designation of the Community Plan. Industrial uses north of the Property do not appear to include uses that are required to be at least 500 feet from a more restrictive zone in the LAMC; no existing or prospective tenants would be adversely affected.

Residential use of the Property would complement existing single family development that abuts the opposite side of Sepulveda Boulevard by providing a wider range of housing opportunities.. Amending the Community Plan to Neighborhood Commercial with a Height District designation of 2 is more compatible with the adjacent single family homes than the existing Heavy Industrial designation. The Project's setback from Sepulveda Boulevard and the existence of the commercial uses along the north side of Sepulveda Boulevard also provides a buffer to the single family residential neighborhood south of Sepulveda Boulevard. As revised and proposed, the Project will be adequately buffered from the nearby industrial uses and designed and built to mitigate noise impact from surrounding uses.

There is no evidence in the record that the ongoing conversion of land planned and zoned for industrial use to commercial use within the Sepulveda Corridor has had any adverse impact on any adjacent land uses. Nor will the development of the Project result in any adverse impact on any adjacent land uses.

- o Criterion: *Where it can be demonstrated that the reduction of industrial lands will not adversely impact the City's ability to accommodate sufficient industrial uses to provide jobs for the City's residents or incur adverse fiscal impacts;*

The Project will not adversely impact the City's ability to accommodate sufficient industrial uses to provide jobs for the City's residents. Approximately 41 percent of the Community Plan land area is planned for industrial uses. The 5.1 acres of land represented by the Project account for less than one-half of one percent of the total industrial acres designated by the Community Plan. Much of the nearby industrial area, including adjacent portions in the unincorporated County, are used for temporary activities such as a 350-car automobile auction lot near the intersection of the Harbor and San Diego Freeways, indicating a large surplus of industrial property extending beyond the boundaries of the Harbor Gateway community.

The absence of an updated community plan for nearly two decades underscores the public necessity of considering and approving the subject plan amendment.

In fact, there appears to be more industrial land in the general area surrounding the Project than is needed. The overabundance of industrial land in the Harbor Gateway community is evidenced by the following:

- A Holiday Inn at 19800 S. Vermont Avenue was developed as the result of a plan amendment and zone change from M3 to C4;
- An Extended Stay hotel, a Walmart and other retail stores at the southwest corner of Normandie Avenue and 190th Street was developed on property that was amended from Heavy Industrial to Neighborhood Commercial and from M3 to C2.
- Additional industrial sites in the adjacent unincorporated County are also used for commercial or residential purposes including:
 - a site adjacent to the Harbor Freeway, Vermont Avenue and 190th Street used as a 350-acre outdoor automobile auction,
 - a site on the 22900 block of S. Normandie Avenue, one block north of the Project, rezoned from industrial to residential to permit development of 78 residential condominiums in 2009 and
 - a site at 22425 – 22433 S. Vermont Avenue rezoned from M-1 to R-4 to permit a six-story, 246-unit residential condominium project currently under construction.

Therefore, there is precedent for amending the Heavy Industrial designation in the Community Plan based, in part, on the policy to consider re-designating underutilized parcels for alternate use.

The Project will provide jobs in the community. The Project will be constructed as a Class A multi-family community which will contain a broad array of amenities and systems such as a swimming pool, fitness center, club house, meeting rooms, recreational facilities, state of the art communication systems, Wi-Fi, elevators, methane gas detection system, sprinkler system, fire detection and alarm system, energy efficient lighting, central HVAC system and landscaping. In order for all of these amenities and systems to operate smoothly, the Project will rely on technicians, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, elevator crews, painters, cleaning crews, gardeners, pool cleaners and security personnel. Also needed are property managers, marketing executives, advertising agents and leasing specialists. The Project is anticipated to employ 40 full time people to perform ongoing operational functions to keep the facility in good order. Tenants may also have home-based businesses. Therefore, notwithstanding that the Project is a residential one, it will create a wide range of full time employment.

No adverse fiscal impact is expected to the City. The residential buildings will add value to the underlying land and increase the property taxes payable to local agencies including the City.

Housing Element