

## PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: September 7, 2010

### ITEM FOR CONSIDERATION

#### Case No. 10-1551-DP/CDP

Continued review of a request for a Development Plan and Coastal Development Permit to remodel an existing two-story, eight-unit apartment complex and convert the four existing second floor units into one, three-bedroom unit, thereby reducing the total unit count to five units. The proposed remodel includes interior alterations as well as major exterior changes to all building elevations, hardscape and landscaping.

**Report prepared by:** Nick Bobroff, Associate Planner  
Community Development Department

  
SIGNATURE

**Reviewed by:** Jackie Campbell, Director  
Community Development Department

  
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**Applicant:** Barbara and Peter Coeler

**Agent:** William Araluce, AIA

**Project Location:** 261 Linden Avenue

**APN:** 003-483-007

**Zoning:** Planned Residential Development  
(PRD-20)

**General Plan Designation:** Medium Density  
Residential (MDR)



### I. RECOMMENDATION

Adopt the attached Resolution, thereby approving Project Number 10-1551-DP/CDP to allow for the interior and exterior remodel of the existing apartment complex, including the reduction to the number of units from eight to five.

## II. PROPOSED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

**Development Plan:** The proposed project includes a comprehensive exterior and interior remodel of the existing two-story Islands Apartments complex and converting the eight-unit complex to five units. The four existing ground floor units would remain as monthly rental units, made up of three one bedroom units and one two-bedroom unit. The four existing second floor units (three one bedroom units and one two-bedroom unit) would be consolidated and converted into one three-bedroom apartment for the property owners.

The proposed exterior modifications would affect all building elevations and include the following:

- Replace existing flat roof and parapet wall with new pitched roof, thereby increasing the maximum building height from 20 feet four inches to 25 feet six inches;
- Remove 92 square feet from the rear elevation at the northwest corner of the building, thereby reducing the square footage of ground floor Unit A, and the upstairs residence by 46 square feet apiece;
- Construct a new 255 square foot attached one-car garage for the upstairs unit;
- Replace existing exterior doors and windows with new doors and windows;
- Replace existing painted plaster exterior with new siding and shingles;
- Remodel the existing second floor deck, including removing the south staircase and expanding the deck area by reducing the interior second floor square footage by 116 square feet (from 2,246 square feet to 2,130 square feet) to accommodate an outdoor patio/fireplace area;
- Construct a 354 square foot second floor deck on the rear elevation and a new 64 square foot exterior stairway; and
- Construct new rooftop deck.

The total square footage of the building would be increased by approximately 111 square feet (from 4,492 square feet to 4,603 square feet). The total amount of deck square footage would increase from 646 square feet to 1,000 square feet.

Additional site improvements are comprised of:

- New site landscaping, including the construction of a bioswale to treat runoff from the parking lot before it enters the City's storm drain system;
- Redesigning and resurfacing the existing parking area to accommodate one parking space for each unit and one additional visitor parking space as well as provide a turn-around area for cars exiting the parking lot;
- Constructing a new trash enclosure for the complex;
- Completing right-of-way improvements to the Third Street frontage, including new landscaping and a parallel parking area made of a permeable material to replace the illegal parking spaces in the street-side yard setback; and
- Creating expanded private patio areas for the four ground floor units, facing Linden Avenue. The expanded patios would be enclosed by picket fences and landscaping with individual

walkways from the public sidewalk to each patio/entry. The patios would encroach into an easement held by the City for flood control and drainage purposes. An Encroachment Permit would be required from the Public Works Department to accommodate this feature of the project.

**Coastal Development Permit:** A Coastal Development Permit is required to allow the proposed development as described above. Plans are attached as Exhibit 1, Attachment B.

### **III. BACKGROUND**

#### **Site Characteristics**

The subject property is located at the southwestern corner of Linden Avenue and Third Street. The 8,818 square foot parcel is presently improved with a 4,492 square foot, two-story, eight-unit apartment complex. Of the eight units, six are one-bedroom units and two are two-bedroom units. Currently, four of the units are occupied (three upstairs and one downstairs). The building is oriented towards Linden Avenue, with the front doors for each unit facing the street. Six parking spaces are provided onsite and are accessed from a private driveway off Third Street. Additional unpermitted parking is provided partially within the street-side yard setback and partially within the Third Street right-of-way. The property is considered legal non-conforming in terms of density, parking and front/side setbacks in its current configuration.

The property is encumbered with several easements: (1) A five-foot wide easement along the south property line for overhead utilities; (2) A two-foot six-inch easement along the south property line in favor of the Carpinteria Valley Water District; and (3) A 12-foot wide easement along the front (east) property line in favor of the City for drainage and flood control purposes.

The property is surrounded by single and multi-family residential uses to the north, south and west. Linden Field in Carpinteria State Beach is located to the east, across Linden Avenue. The subject property is located at the "gateway" to the Beach Neighborhood, at a prominent location on Linden Avenue. The Beach Neighborhood exhibits an eclectic mix of housing types from different eras. A wide variety of architectural styles is also considered a defining characteristic of this part of the City.

The site is zoned Planned Residential Development (PRD-20) and has a General Plan land use designation of Medium Density Residential (MDR). The site is not subject to any special overlay districts.

#### **Project History**

The original eight-unit apartment complex was built in 1958. An addition was permitted in 1963. Both permits were issued by the County of Santa Barbara and predate the City's incorporation. Since that time, no other major improvements have taken place outside of typical repair and maintenance, such as kitchen/bathroom remodels and a deck/staircase repair.

### **Planning Commission**

The project was reviewed by the Planning Commission on August 2, 2010. While the Commission was generally supportive of the project and felt it would improve the neighborhood, there were several concerns raised by the neighboring property owners to the west, which the Commission asked be addressed before they would feel comfortable taking action on the project.

The neighbors were primarily concerned with aspects of the site layout that they perceived placed the impacts of the project unacceptably close to their living areas. In particular, the neighbors were opposed to locating the trash enclosure and the majority of the required onsite parking along the shared property line. The neighbors were also opposed to the new deck on the rear elevation of the second floor, which they felt would impose unnecessary privacy impacts on their residence. Finally, the neighbors also expressed concern over the disposition of any property line fences/walls and site drainage from the parking lot and its potential to flood their property.

Ultimately, the Commission continued the project to the September 7<sup>th</sup> hearing with the following directives:

- Restudy the parking arrangement to show that the City's required maneuvering distances are provided for the parallel parking spaces;
- Consider new locations for the trash enclosure, away from the shared property line and provide details for the enclosure itself;
- Reduce the width of the rear second floor deck or scale back the extent of the deck;
- Coordinate with the neighbors on any new property line fences or walls; and
- Consider slight changes to the parking lot elevations to address drainage concerns.

The draft Planning Commission Minutes are attached as Exhibit 2.

### **Architectural Review Board**

The project was reviewed by the ARB at a preliminary level on July 1, 2010 wherein the Board recommended preliminary approval with comments regarding landscaping, exterior colors and the front patio enclosures.

Staff informally returned the project to the Architectural Review Board at their August 26, 2010 meeting under "Matters Referred by the Planning Commission" to update the Board on the proposed changes to the plans. The Boardmembers indicated they were fine with the changes as shown.

## **IV. ENVIRONMENTAL**

This project is categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to §15332 [in-fill development] of the Guidelines for the implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Class 32 Categorical Exemptions consist of projects characterized as in-fill development meeting the following conditions: (1) 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; (2) the proposed development occurs within city limits on a project site of no more than

five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses; (3) the project site has no value, as habitat for endangered, rare, or threatened species; (4) approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality; and (5) the site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services. Because the project is consistent with these standards, as is more particularly described in this staff report, the exemption is appropriate.

For more detail, see the attached Notice of Exemption included as Exhibit 3.

## V. ANALYSIS

The proposed project includes a comprehensive remodel of an existing eight-unit apartment complex in a residential zone. As such, staff has reviewed the project in terms of its compliance with the development standards of Chapter 14, Zoning, of the Carpinteria Municipal Code, and with the policies and objectives of the General Plan/Coastal Land Use Plan.

### **Revisions per Planning Commission Directives**

In response to the Planning Commission's comments, the applicant has incorporated the following changes into the project description and proposed plans.

#### *Parking*

With the relocation of the trash enclosure away from the rear property line, there was adequate room available to adjust the parallel parking arrangement along the rear property line to reflect the required four-foot wide buffers between each parallel parking space. Additionally, the former handicap accessible space (space number six) has been changed into a one-car garage for the upstairs unit. Per discussions with the City Building Inspector, the proposed project is not required to provide an accessible parking space. Therefore, there will be a total of six onsite parking spaces provided; one in the garage and five uncovered. In order to ensure that all six onsite parking spaces are maintained and used for parking, staff has included a condition (#16), that requires all spaces to be provided as shown on the approved plans and be maintained and used for parking for the life of the project.

Slight adjustments have been made to the site plan to improve the maneuvering space throughout the parking area. These include reducing or re-shaping landscape areas to allow for larger drive aisles and turning radii, widening the turn-around hammerhead in the street-side yard setback from nine feet to 11 feet, relocating the support posts for the second floor deck to be farther from the drive aisles and pulling back the rear elevation of ground floor Unit A and the second floor above by three feet to further open up the drive aisle and provide better maneuvering in and out of the new garage space.

In addition to these changes, the applicant studied several other parking layouts in an attempt to continue to accommodate six onsite parking spaces without having to rely so heavily on parallel parking spaces along the rear property line. The attached Exhibit 4 shows these parking studies, which attempt to park the cars up against the Islands Apartments building, similar to the existing

configuration. However, in all of the studies, back-up and maneuvering spaces become impacted towards the southwest corner of the property. Based on the prescribed parking space dimensions and back-up distances described in the Zoning Code (CMC Chapter 14.54), the proposed parking arrangement best reflects a usable parking layout, consistent with the City's design standards.

As part of the project, the existing five unpermitted parking spaces located partially in the street-side yard and partially within the Third Street public right-of-way would be removed and replaced with additional site landscaping area. A road shoulder, made of decomposed granite would border the edge of paving along the Third Street frontage and provide adequate area for approximately three parallel public on-street parking spaces.

### Trash Enclosure

The trash enclosure has been relocated away from the rear property line and placed along the south building elevation, outside of the required setback. The complex would use covered trash and recycling carts, which would be screened from public view behind a wood fence and gate.

Staff met with and discussed the proposed new location and the use of carts rather than roll-off bins with representatives from the City's solid waste contractor, E.J. Harrison and Sons. Based on these discussions, the remodeled Islands Apartments five units requires approximately four trash and four recycling carts, all of which can be accommodated along the side building elevation. Trash service could continue to be provided from Third Street or could now be served from Linden Avenue. Staff has included a condition in the attached Conditions of Approval that would give the property owner the option of either continuing trash/recycling pick-up service along Third Street or paying for walk-up service from Linden Avenue in order to avoid the staging of trash and recycling carts on the Linden Avenue frontage and potentially interfering with public on-street parking and/or pedestrian use of the sidewalk. Landscape waste would continue to be removed by the landscaping contractor; therefore, no yard waste carts would be required of the complex.

### Privacy Impacts/Decks

In response to the neighbors' privacy concerns, the width of the rear second floor balcony/deck has been reduced from approximately seven feet wide to four feet wide for the length of the walkway from the new rear staircase and landing to the main balcony off of the bedroom at the northwest corner of the unit. This reduction in width aims to make this portion of the deck less usable as living area while still allowing it to function as a walkway to and from the staircase to the family room and bedroom.

In addition, the 92 square foot reduction to the back of the building (46 square feet on each floor) pulled the second floor deck back from the property line an additional three feet since last reviewed by the Planning Commission. With this revision, the main second floor deck area off of the northwest corner bedroom is now set back 21 feet five inches from the rear property line as compared to the former distance of 18 feet five inches. The main deck continues to be oriented primarily towards the mountains and over the front yard of the property to the west.