

February 28, 2023

Central City Planning
Los Angeles Department of City Planning
200 N. Spring Street, Rm 621
Los Angeles CA 90012

RE: DENSITY BONUS FINDINGS
ADDRESS: 19333 VENTURA BLVD.

Overview

The project, located at 19333, 19337, 19343, 19351 Ventura Boulevard, is a proposed 4 -story, 65-foot tall, Density Bonus, mixed-use project with consisting of 8,225 sf ground floor commercial space and 3 stories plus a loft level at the highest floor with 70 apartment units and a 2-bedroom ADU.

The subject site is zoned C2-1VLD, which the General Plan designates as a Community Commercial Land Use. The site is also within the Ventura/Cahuenga Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan area and is designated as Neighborhood and General Commercial. The property is located on the North side of Ventura Boulevard with Calvin Avenue to the West, Tampa Avenue to the East and an alley and the 101 Freeway directly to its North. Properties surrounding the site are zoned C2-1VLD, PF-1XL and developed with commercial buildings. Per NavigateLA, Ventura Boulevard is an arterial street classified as Boulevard II.

The project site consists of 5 lots with a total lot area of 31,328 square feet and is currently improved with a 2-story motel, 1 story restaurant, 2-story building with ground floor restaurant and 2nd floor office all of which are to be demolished.

INCENTIVES AND WAIVER REQUEST FINDINGS

A. The incentives do not result in identifiable and actual cost reductions to provide for affordable housing costs as defined in California Health and Safety Code Section 50052.5 or Section 50053 for rents for the affordable units.

Off-Menu Incentives

Due to the design constraints from the Ventura/Cahuenga Specific Plan, the proposed project is requesting for incentives which are not part of the LAMC 12.22 A.25 pre-evaluated list and as such, are subject to LAMC Section 12.22A25(f), to get reliefs that would minimize restrictions on the size of the project. The requested incentives are necessary to provide the much-needed housing in the City and it is through these incentives that the project can increase its scale and build affordable housing units.

The off-menu requests which are 1) increase floor area ratio (FAR) to a maximum of 3:1 in lieu of the permitted Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 1:1 per the Ventura/Cahuenga Corridor Specific Plan and 2) Side Yard Reductions on each yard to allow 5'-0" in lieu of the 7'-0" required for a 4-story building. The requested FAR, and reduced side yards result in a building design and construction efficiencies that will result in actual and identifiable cost reductions that contribute toward affordable housing costs. With these requested incentives, the increased building envelope enables affordable units to be constructed, by expanding the area allocated for the residential aspect of the project. These incentives are needed in order to set aside 11 dwelling units for Very Low-Income households out of the 70 total dwelling units proposed in the development.

Floor Area Ratio Increase: The subject site is zoned C2-1VLD which allows a base of 85 units on the 31,238 square foot site. The Specific Plan limits the site to a maximum 1: 1 FAR, otherwise the C Zone would allow 1.5:1 maximum FAR. The project request of 3:1 FAR Increase incentive permits a percentage increase in the allowable Floor Area Ratio which would help accommodate the additional affordable units.

Side Yard Reduction: The project is requesting for 5'-0" feet side yards in lieu of the 7'-0" required due to its number of stories. The requested reduction is the minimum setback required for RAS3 yards which is typical of mixed-use developments in highly urbanized areas such in major arterials as the subject site. The reduced setback is needed to maximize the buildable area to provide for enough market rate units and provide for 11 Very Low Income units. Given this reduction, the project still provides adequate access to light and air through windows and balconies. This incentive allows for the project to increase the envelope and have units that are constructed with sufficient size, configuration and quality.

B. The incentives would have a specific, adverse impact, as defined in paragraph (2) of subdivision (d) of Section 65589.5, upon public health and safety or on any real property that is listed in the California Register of Historical Resources and for which there is no feasible method to satisfactorily mitigate or avoid the specific, adverse impact without rendering the development unaffordable to low-income and moderate-income households.

Per LAMC Section 12.22.A.25(b), "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". There is no evidence in the record that the proposed density bonus incentives will have a specific adverse impact.

Per the Transportation Assessment prepared by Overland traffic Consultants, Inc. dated December 2022, the Project does not create a significant transportation VMT impact or any significant circulation, access and safety deficiencies. Furthermore, the project does not propose 80 or more residential units or more than 75,000 sq.ft. of non-residential use that may affect Air Quality. There are no Biological or Historical Resources on site as well.

C. The waiver[s] or reduction[s] of development standards will not have the effect of physically precluding the construction of a development meeting the [affordable set-aside percentage] criteria of subdivision (b) at the densities or with the concessions or incentives permitted under [State Density Bonus Law]" (Government Code Section 65915(e)(1)).

The proposed project is seeking for waivers of development standards primarily due to restrictions imposed by the Ventura/Cahuenga Specific Plan. Pursuant to Government Code Section 65915(e), the Commission is also required to grant a "waiver or reduction of development standards that will have the effect of physically precluding the construction of the density bonus project."

Parking Reduction: Per the Density Bonus Parking Option 1, the project is required to provide 79 parking spaces for the residential portion of the development. However, a waiver of a 37% reduction is requested to allow 50 parking spaces where three are compact/tandem, and three are compact.

Given the parking requirements by the Specific Plan, the project would have to be excavated more to meet required parking spaces. The limitation on the footprint and height makes it more physically and economically infeasible to provide parking, build the market rate units and set aside the 11 affordable units. The site, however, is located along an arterial street with several transit stops within the vicinity, are available to the residents. Stops for MTA Lines 150, 242 and Rapid 787 at the East end of the block. MTA Line 243 is right in front of the site.

Lot Coverage Increase: The Ventura/Cahuenga Specific Plan limits the lot coverage to 60% for the Neighborhood and General Commercial Plan Designation Areas, however, the project is requesting for a 90% lot coverage in lieu of this requirement.

One of the Citywide General Plan Framework Element's objective is to "encourage multi-family residential, retail commercial and office development in the City's neighborhood districts, community, regional, and downtown centers as well as along primary transit corridors/boulevards, while at the same time conserving existing neighborhoods and related districts". The additional footprint is essential in order to provide housing units of sufficient size and quality, and provide a development that is in keeping with this objective to serve the residents of the area. The density and unit mix proposed would not be feasible without this. Given this lot coverage request, the project has been thoughtfully designed to provide a harmonious relationship between the residential and commercial developments in the area. The ground floor plaza and landscaping is designed to enhance the pedestrian activity in the area and mitigates effect of the increased lot coverage. The upper floors are broken down into two towers with a 2nd floor plaza breaking down the massing. The site being bounded by an alley and the 101 Freeway to the North, and fronting a main thoroughfare, Ventura Boulevard, does not impact any neighboring properties negatively.

Height Waivers: The project is requesting for height waivers in lieu of the height restrictions per the Ventura/Cahuenga Specific Plan. A 65'-0" maximum height is requested in lieu of the 30'-0" allowed as well as an exemption from the setback requirements for buildings above 30'-0".

The underlying height district of the site, 1VL, allows for a 45'-0" maximum height, however the Specific Plan only allows for 30'-0" and further limits the building height with setback requirements above 30'-0". Given the mixed-use nature of the project that is in keeping with the developments in the area, these height waivers are necessary to create transparency in the ground floor design of the project to enhance pedestrian activity and neighborhood quality, at the same time build the market rate units and 11 affordable units. The allowed height would not be sufficient to provide the housing units within the limited envelope.

The proposed project has varying heights and several setbacks throughout the development. The ground floor entrance plaza, the 2nd floor courtyard and the roof deck, all located at the center of the project, creates an appealing design that mitigates the additional height requested.

1) The facade of any portion of a building that abuts a street shall be articulated with a change of material or with a break in plane, so that the facade is not a flat surface. Indicate the sheet number on your plans which shows compliance with the requirement.

The proposed four-story, mixed-use project with lofts utilizes a variety of materials on its facade. The ground floor is a mix of board formed concrete and stucco with wide expanses of glass storefront, defining the base of the building. The upper stories are a mix of stucco, metal and standing seam metal cladding, glass railings and wood finish sliding shutters. The building is well-articulated, with a play of different planes. Please refer to sheet A3.1 thru A3.4 for reference together with the colored elevations and renderings.

2) All buildings must be oriented to the street by providing entrances, windows, architectural features and/or balconies on the front and along any street-facing elevations. Indicate the sheet number on your plans which shows compliance with the requirement.

As shown on the plans found A2.2 thru A2.6 as well as the elevations on A3.1 thru A3.4, the proposed project has fenestrations and balconies along Ventura Boulevard. The entrances to the commercial retail as well as the main lobby are all fronting Ventura Boulevard as well.

3) The Housing Development Project shall not be a contributing structure in a designated Historic Preservation Overlay Zone and shall not be on the City of Los Angeles list of Historical-Cultural Monuments.

Based on the information found on Zimas, the project site is not located on a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone nor is the existing structure classified as a Historical-Cultural Monument.

4) The Housing Development Project shall not be located on a substandard street in a Hillside Area or in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone as established in Section 57.4908 of the Municipal Code.

Based on the information found on the Bureau of Engineering Navigate LA site, the streets Ventura Boulevard is an arterial street classified as Boulevard II. Per Zimas, the site is not found to be within the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.