

Plaza 2555 Project Narrative

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The Plaza 2555 project (“Plaza 2555”) is located at 2555 Cowell Boulevard, at the intersection of Research Park Drive and Cowell Boulevard in South Davis. The project would construct approximately, and no more than, 200 apartments of varying sizes and configurations on two vacant parcels totaling about 7.34 gross acres.

Plaza 2555 is located and designed to generate broad-based appeal among a wide range of Davis residents, including workforce participants, students, young professionals, and people downsizing their housing. First, the project is in an ideal location near employment opportunities, neighborhood shopping, great transportation, quality schools, and convenient medical services. Second, the project incorporates solid basic building concepts such as a variety of apartment sizes, in-unit laundry, and effective sound-proofing. Third, the apartments will have appealing features like wireless internet, secure bike parking, direct access to the outdoors, and convenient on-site parking. In all, the project is designed to appeal broadly to a wide range of people in order to create a vibrant, diverse community of residents.

After all, the City’s extraordinarily low vacancy rate (0.02%) affects all Davisites be they renters or homeowners, including people in the workforce, students, families, young professionals, and seniors. We believe that Plaza 2555’s broad-based appeal addresses the City’s unmet housing needs and responds effectively to the input that we have received from neighbors, residents, and decision-makers.

Physical design

Approximately 6.35 gross acres of the site would be developed into row-house style buildings, each containing several apartments of various sizes and separated by landscaping. This design allows for an active street front with a variety of elevations facing Research Park Drive. It also allows the project to include many types of units. The interior of the site will include pleasant landscaped pedestrian walks connecting the rowhouses, bike storage, and parking areas. The remaining 1-acre parcel would be developed with a vegetative barrier together with automobile parking for the project’s residents.

Overall, the project would include a mix of micro flat, 1-bedroom, 2-bedroom, 3-bedroom, 4-bedroom, and 5-bedroom apartments in a total of up to 200 apartments (approximately 607 bedrooms). Most of the units are smaller apartments. There would also be a leasing office, a café, multiple indoor activity areas, co-working space, pedestrian pathways, landscaped courtyards and common open space areas, about 367 parking spaces, and bicycle parking areas (accommodating about 607 bicycle parking spaces). Site amenities would also include a tot lot and outdoor gathering area; indoor space for activities like yoga, dance, and private events; study rooms; a gym; a transit plaza (described below); large interconnected landscaping between the rowhouses; mail and package pickup/dropoff; and a car share/hail area.

The overall organization and theme for the project is a pedestrian-scaled village. The project will have an eclectic architectural style, blending traditional features of gabled and shed roofs with streamlined parapets. Windows, balconies and porches will create a neighborhood feel. Finishes will be primarily lap siding, stucco, and composition roofing with some areas accented by steel and wood railings, canopies,

posts and exposed rafters. The arrangement of the apartments into rowhouses will reduce the overall massing and increase the project’s compatibility with the neighborhood. Further articulation is accomplished by the use of various elevations along the street front.

The project is proposed to be built as a LEED GOLD for homes certified project. The buildings would be at least 15 percent more energy efficient than required by Chapter 6 of Title 24. Furthermore, the buildings and landscaping would be designed to use 25 percent less water than the average household uses in the region.

A Mix of Unit Sizes

We see a real need for a more traditional mix of units that provide opportunities for all kinds of Davis renters, rather than simply for students. The mix of units is designed to attract a range of diverse residents and create a vibrant community. The very low vacancy rate for rental housing in Davis affects students and everyone else looking for rental housing. In contrast to other recent student-oriented projects that the City has recently approved, Plaza 2555 would be focused on meeting a variety of unmet housing needs, including small units.

In conversation with neighbors, stakeholders, and decision makers, Plaza 2555 has committed to providing at least 67% of its units as “smaller units” with three bedrooms or fewer. At least 10% of the overall number of units will be “micro units,” which are described in more detail below. Plaza 2555 has also committed to cap the overall number of “larger units” with four or more bedrooms at 33% of the total number of units. No more than 10% of the total number of units would have five bedrooms. This guaranteed mix of units is designed to respond to community input and provide excellent housing options for renters.

TABLE 1: UNIT SIZES		
Fewer	Unit Types	More
	<i>Smaller Units</i>	67%
	Micro unit (minimum 10%)	
	One bedroom	
	Two bedroom	
	Three bedroom townhouse	
	Three bedroom flat	
33%	<i>Larger Units</i>	
	Four bedroom townhouse	
	Five bedroom townhouse (maximum 10%)	

Plaza 2555’s Illustrative Unit Mix

Studio apartments represent only 3 percent of the existing apartment units in Davis, and no smaller apartments, other than a few senior/handicapped units, have been built in years. One attribute that distinguishes Plaza 2555 is the large proportion of smaller units, including “micro-flats” of about 350 square feet each. Although new to Davis, such units have been very popular in other similar cities. These smaller apartments would be fully accessible and have full kitchens and separate baths. We see a

real need for these types of homes and believe they would provide a unique opportunity for early-career professionals to transition from having roommates to living in their own apartment.

Plaza 2555 is designed to appeal to many different kinds of renters, including the following:

- **Workforce Housing.** Recent projects have focused on larger units that are designed for students. There are few workforce housing options, and Plaza 2555 will include new options for such residents who want to live either alone or with their nuclear families in relatively small apartments near employment and convenient to neighborhood services like shopping, parks, and schools.
- **Professionals.** With so many recent student housing projects, there has been little attention given to recent graduates seeking their first housing as young professionals. Microunits, without roommates, or 2 and 3 bedroom units, with roommates, are likely to appeal to young professionals who are just starting their careers. Providing housing that appeals to young professionals can have the secondary benefit of relieving some of the market pressure on student housing closer to campus, saving that student housing for students themselves.
- **Students.** Students comprise a large proportion of the renters in Davis and would likewise be welcome residents in the Plaza 2555 project.
- **Downsizing.** Finally, there are few rental housing choices for people downsizing into smaller housing. Creating new rental housing of various sizes creates options for people whose living situations change and who want to stay in Davis. Plaza 2555's proximity to transit, neighborhood shopping, and medical services makes it particularly well suited to such people.

Table 2 shows the illustrative mix of unit types and sizes proposed for Plaza 2555:

TABLE 2: ILLUSTRATIVE UNIT MIX			
Unit Size	Approximate number of units	Approximate square footage of each unit	Approximate square footage associated with unit type
<i>Smaller Apartments</i>			
Micro apartment	30	350	10,500
One bedroom	4	600	2,400
Two bedroom	11	900	9,900
Three bedroom (townhouse)	29	1,360	39,440
Three bedroom (flat)	60	1,200	72,000
<i>SUBTOTAL</i>	<i>134</i>		
<i>Larger Apartments</i>			
Four bedroom (townhouse)	46	1,720	79,120
Five bedroom (townhouse)	20	2,050	41,000
<i>SUBTOTAL</i>	<i>66</i>		
Common areas			14,150
Garages			11,160
Approximate Total	200		279,670

Traditional Apartments Designed for Broad Appeal

It is worth noting that the Plaza 2555 project is designed as a traditional apartment project, rather than as Purpose-Built Student Housing (PBSH). This is reflected in the unit mix (see above) as well as other design features. PBSH tends to include monolithic buildings in which apartments are accessed by long hotel-type corridors. The PBSH projects include a higher proportion of large apartments that are leased by the bed. In contrast, Plaza 2555 includes a variety of rowhouses in which the apartments open to the outside. Most of the units are smaller units. Leasing will be typical by the unit not bed-

TABLE 3: DIFFERENTIATING PURPOSE-BUILT STUDENT HOUSING						
Project	Front doors open to...	Buildings are...	Building mass is...	Leasing is done by the...	% smaller apartments	% larger apartments
Sterling	Hotel Corridor	Connected	Monolithic	Bed	32.5%	67.5%
Lincoln40	Hotel Corridor	Connected	Monolithic	Bed	29.2%	70.77%
Oxford Live	Hotel Corridor	Connected	Monolithic	Bed	1.4%	98.6%
<i>Plaza 2555</i>	<i>Outside</i>	<i>Detached</i>	<i>Articulated and separate</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>67.0%</i>	<i>33.0%</i>

Transit Connectivity

Plaza 2555 is located to be convenient to employment opportunities in Sacramento, Davis, and on campus, as well as to neighborhood and local services. The project is oriented and designed to encourage the use of alternative transportation—including pedestrian, bike, and transit use—rather than cars.

- **Pedestrian Access.** The units will be located within an 8-minute walk from the Oakshade Town Center neighborhood shopping center and an 8-minute walk from the University Research Park (Interland Business Park) and its employment opportunities, using the bike path and parkways.
- **Bicycle Access.** The bicycle parking and storage will be proximate, safe, and convenient so that residents have easy access to their bicycles for transportation. The site is adjacent to designated bikeways that permit safe, direct access to campus and throughout the City and beyond. Plaza 2555 is conveniently located for cyclists traveling in any direction. For cyclists traveling east to Sacramento along Cowell/Chiles, it is one roundabout and two stop lights to the causeway bike path. For cyclists traveling to downtown Davis, there is a bike path on the adjacent Pole Line overcrossing or to the west along the Richards Boulevard overcrossing. And for cyclists traveling to the University, the most direct route travels along Research Park Drive to the I-80 bike undercrossing.

- **Transit Access.** Finally, the project will be located along the existing transit corridor, recognized by SACOG, on Cowell and Research Park Drive: the site is on two Unitrans bus lines while a third Unitrans line and the Yolo Bus line are one block away. The Unitrans M goes to and returns from the Memorial Union on campus. The Unitrans W goes to and returns from the Silo on campus. Both of these routes stop at Plaza 2555. The Unitrans P goes to downtown Davis before the Memorial Union, and then clockwise around town. The Unitrans Q goes east to the Nugget Market center, continues on to Target, and then proceeds clockwise around Davis. The Yolo Bus 42 Express goes to and returns from Sacramento. Stops for the P, Q and 42 are within a block of Plaza 2555.

The project proposes a transit plaza near the “tip” of the intersection of Cowell and Research Park Drive. This natural focal point provides an ideal transit location because it is convenient to the project interior, as well as to the adjacent bus lines and bike lanes. Pedestrians from the project would be funneled on landscaped pedestrian paths to the transit plaza. The transit plaza will provide convenient bus access, as well as the café, protective shelters (from sun and rain) with benches, a bus schedule up-date board, comfortable street furniture, seating areas, planters, and a car-share/car-hail area.

In contrast to the ease of pedestrian, bike, and bus access, the parking design and access will make the use of private cars less convenient and attractive. Access to the parking areas will be less convenient than access to the bike ways and transit plaza. Moreover, exiting the parking areas will require a turn away from campus, making a car commute to campus less convenient. Together, the convenience of alternative transportation and gentle “nudges” away from automobiles through project design will facilitate alternative transit choices.