

Olive Drive Mixed Use Development

The project being proposed, the Olive Drive Mixed Use Development will lead the way to a new paradigm of affordable living in the City of Davis. As we all know, in Davis available real estate is at a premium and undeveloped real estate is almost non-existent. Thus we need to look to rehabilitating older sites within the City jurisdiction and creating new and exciting opportunities. Infill development is a likely and effective solution to the provision of new housing, and our project hopes to bring a new standard for sustainable and efficient workforce housing.

Conception:

The genesis of this project came from the recognition of two glaring realities; first, there are very, very few housing opportunities for the City's non-professional workforce, and secondly, there are no such opportunities being constructed or considered. There are many reasons for this including the extremely high cost of developable real estate in Davis, and the obligation to provide a significant affordable component to be included with all for-rent projects. With this project the applicants hope to provide a source of workforce housing opportunities and, by design, an affordable attractive product. This site is comprised of four developed parcels totaling 0.56 acres on the north side of Olive Drive, roughly 300 feet east of Richards Boulevard. The four properties all contain smaller single-family homes built in the 1940's.

Description:

The project involves demolition of all existing structures, and redevelopment of the site with 47 studio apartments and approximately 1,450 square feet of commercial space. The commercial space will house the office for the apartment as well as a commercial space ideal for coffee or convenience store use. The apartment units will be relatively small, at 425 square feet. No specific commercial use is specified at this time, but the ground floor units can "flex" to commercial space if warranted. The most prominent site features, the two Cork Oak trees, and a large Valley Oak tree will be retained. It is expected the units will be rented by downtown workers, UC Davis employees, senior citizens, those living on a fixed income, and possibly some students. This will be accomplished by constructing 4 three-story buildings of 18 stacked flat one-bedroom apartments in each, and the construction of two units above the commercial space. The key to this is to reducing the number of residential parking spaces from 72 (pursuant to City code 40.25.090) down to just four in order to cater the project to downtown workers, UC Davis employees, senior citizens and others living on a fixed income that have chosen not to own cars and to instead to generally utilize bicycles and public transit within the City. Considering the location, this property is in an ideal location to accommodate this segment of the population.

Location:

The key element to this project is its location on Olive Drive. From the project it will be: an approximate 5 minute walk to the Amtrak station providing access to bus and train service; an approximate 5 minute walk to a couple of Unibus stops (one at the end of Olive Drive 300 feet east); an approximate 6 minute walk to both the center of the Downtown Core and UC Davis (both heavily reliant on local workforce), a 13 minute walk to both the Safeway on Cowell Blvd. and the Davis

Food Co-op, plus similar distances from a host of food, beverage and service opportunities. With such proximity to these services, and corresponding employment opportunities, there is no pressing need to own a car and as a result, no need to provide a large supply of parking spaces, that are simply not needed and encourage automobile use.

Transportation:

While a critical element for consideration on most prototypical projects, transportation, often equated with Traffic, takes a different spin with this project. Initially, due to the proximate location, walking and bicycling seem to be the primary transportation modes. However, longer trips are necessary and alternate modes do exist close by. The bus, train and Unibus all have stops very close, but in order to increase the opportunities for other modes of transportation, the project is planning on providing a ZipCar space and vehicle and is also planning to reserve two ride hailing spaces for taxis, or others such as Uber and Lyft. We are also intending to get involved with the Jump Bike program new to town and will hopefully be able to provide tenants access to these great vehicles.

Affordable Housing

The project also is proposing an affordable housing component in line with the City's code requirement. The applicants have watched the debate regarding the affordable requirement as the City has struggled with pursuing the affordable need against the ability for projects to support them. By the design of these smaller units, and by the yield generated by severely reducing the parking provided, the project can offer market rate affordable units for both moderate and low income households. In addition, the project will propose deed restricting 13 of the units as permanent Low and Moderate income housing units. This amounts to almost 28% of the provided units being guaranteed as affordable, with the balance of the units being market rate affordable. This is almost double the current number of affordable units required. However, it should be noted that the project is not proposing the provision of any Very Low or Extremely Low income affordable product. As the City's recent study has shown, (A. Plescia and Cop.; and Gruen Gruen and Associates, December 2017, and updated October 2018) provision of affordable housing product at any of the ranges (Moderate, Low, Very Low or Extremely Low) is infeasible on a market rate situation. They also point out that most market rate rental projects are unfeasible even when "*no affordable housing requirements are imposed*", due to the existing cost of real estate in the City of Davis. The applicants believe that this project can provide affordable product for the Low and Moderate income ranges without public subsidies. Subsidized projects are seemingly the only way to achieve the full range of affordable housing as the study points out "*Non-profit affordable housing projects tend to have different economics than the prototypical multi-family developments*" It is for these reasons, that the applicants are only able to provide Moderate and low income affordable product.

Consistency:

This project is quite simply a significant implementation of the local preference for housing supply as detailed in the General Plan. The full application will further detail the many, many policies and actions encouraged by the General Plan which this project is consistent with. But just to highlight a few, this project is in full alignment with the following GP policies:

1. Land Use A.2 and A.3 and Housing 1.1 call for a variety of housing types, unit sizes densities, prices and rents, designs and architecture diversity.
2. Provide a mix of housing types and price that will serve a variety of households and lifestyles, *particularly the needs of local employees.*
3. Focus growth inward to accommodate population increases. Infill is supported as an appropriate means of meeting some of the City's housing needs.
4. Create and maintain housing patterns that promote energy conserving transportation methods.
5. Particular to the Olive Drive Specific Plan area – provide for vital, mixed-use development that connects the University and Core Area along I-80 at the Gateway to Davis.
6. LU 2.1 - Develop guidelines for infill development and comprehensive car management strategies, and should recognize:
 - a. New mixed-use transit oriented development in/near established neighborhoods
 - b. Densification of existing single family lots.
 - c. Target residential infill to address the needs of UC Davis students, and employees, City and School district employees, seniors, lower income households and others.
 - d. Reduce the reliance on the automobile.
 - e. Encourage density bonuses for residential projects in proximity to public facilities and services including bus stops.

And there are many more.