



April 25, 2018

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City of Davis Department of Community Development and Sustainability  
23 Russell Boulevard  
Davis, CA 05616

Re:

### **Theta Xi Project Narrative**

The existing Theta Xi Fraternity currently occupies three adjacent lots/houses on the project site on First Street between D Street and the Natsoulas Gallery Building. The three lots at 515, 509 and 503 First Street are owned by the Beta Epsilon Association of Theta Xi, a non-profit California corporation, and occupied by the fraternity. The site has provided student housing dating from 1950 when Theta Xi acquired the first of the three lots. From east to west are the “TX Main House”, the “Bryson House” and the “Jackson House”. There is also a detached garage in the northwest corner.

This re-development proposal anticipates demolition of the Bryson and Jackson houses and garage, and lot line adjustments to create two parcels of roughly equal width. This will allow for construction of a more compact, consolidated singular fraternity building that will also create a more urban edge, consistent with city planning goals for the neighborhood. The architectural theme recalls the Craftsman Bungalow style of the houses being replaced. During construction, the TX Main House will continue to serve the fraternity's housing and study needs. Once the new fraternity building is completed, the fraternity will consolidate all of its activities onto the new western parcel and the TX Main House along with its expanded lot will be vacated and made available for another tenant or higher and better use re-development proposal.

The objectives of the proposed project are to: Address deficiencies in the structural integrity of the three houses used to house the undergraduate members of the Theta Xi Fraternity on First Street in Davis, CA, as identified in the report by Pemberton Engineering, dated July 27, 2016; Renovate the subject properties in a way that provides for the needs of UCD students by ensuring that housing is competitive both in rent and amenities available within the City of Davis, including on-campus housing, in order to ensure the sustainability of the fraternity; Use the value embedded in the three owned lots to assist in funding the renovation project by consolidating the housing needs of the fraternity onto a smaller footprint; Construct the new building with features that will allow it to achieve a high level of energy efficiency and reduce ongoing maintenance costs; and Continue to use the new facility as classrooms that, through fellowship and alumni guidance, lead to the wholesome mental, moral, physical and spiritual growth that is the purpose of the Theta Xi Fraternity .

The proposal will consolidate all living and study areas into a single new 3-story building with partial basement, a detached laundry and storage building and trash enclosure, and associated site landscaping with exterior meeting and gathering spaces. There will also be a dedicated “Bike Barn” with bike maintenance space and a one-to-one ratio of covered and secured bike storage to beds. Additional guest bike parking is planned for the



city landscape strip on First Street. It includes a new parking lot accessed from D Street through a secured vehicle gate. The new concealed off-street parking and recreation area in the rear significantly increases the number of conforming off-street parking spaces available to the fraternity. The number of beds housing the fraternity would be reduced from 38 to 35; the densification of the parcel would be increased by 50%.

The development would be handicap-accessible, safer and incorporate state-of-the art energy efficiency measures. Sustainable design features will include high levels of envelope insulation, high efficiency HVAC, LED Lighting, solar shading devices, EV Charging outlets and a low water use landscaping and irrigation system. Landscaped bio-swales are proposed to be incorporated into the First and D street landscaping edges. It is anticipated that the project will target a “LEED Silver” equivalency.

### **Project Setting and Surrounding Land Uses**

The project site is located at the northeast corner of First and D Streets in the Downtown Core Area, near what is considered the historic gateway to the City of Davis (Vicinity Map). The project site is flat. The western most lot is paved between the sidewalk and the structure for off-street parking. The area has several trees scattered about. There is a paved recreation/patio area behind the two houses and the front area is landscaped with shrubbery and lawn. The site is bounded by a mix of uses and facilities. Adjacent parcels include a funeral home on D Street and an art gallery on First Street adjacent to the eastern lot owned by the fraternity. The project site faces a landscaped buffer and the back of a retail building in a shopping plaza on the south side of First Street. The surrounding area is a mix of retail, single family and apartment developments along First Street and D and E Streets.

### **Policy, Plan, and Zoning Consistency**

The General Plan and Core Area Specific Plan designation for the site is Retail Stores and it is zoned Mixed Use. The Mixed Use (M-U) District calls for implementing the policies of the core plan; preserving the older architectural styles and encouraging an increased variety and intermixture of residential and commercial activities; and enhancing the tree-shaded ambiance, pedestrian usage and character of the district. The Core Area Design Combining District, an overlay district that applies to areas zoned Mixed-Use, has among its purposes to provide for the harmonious blending of residential and commercial uses; preserve the older architectural styles and encourage the intermingling of compatible structures; enhance the pedestrian and bicycle-oriented character of the core; and preserve the tree-shaded ambiance. The Specific Plan recognizes the stabilization of existing residential neighborhoods in the Core Area as critical in maintaining a healthy and viable downtown. The retention of a residential base in the Core Area is seen as crucial to the success of the pedestrian environment of the downtown. Among the guiding policies of the General Plan is to strengthen the visual connection between the Core and the University. All of these policies support the efforts of the fraternity to remain at the location that it has occupied for the last 67+ years.

The entire north side of First Street between D and E Streets, occupied by the art gallery and the fraternity, and the portion of the block around the corner on D Street adjacent to the fraternity occupied by the funeral home are among the few remaining properties on the boundary of the retail store designation in the area not developed for retail uses. The north side of First Street between D and E Streets does not lend itself to pedestrian oriented retail development without suitable parking and such parking could only be provided



below grade at a significant cost. The designation in the General Plan of First Street being a primary automobile through route raises additional concerns. The properties on First Street between D and E Streets should be recognized as being in the transitional area and not suitable for pedestrian oriented retail store fronts built out to the street along the entire block.

The proposed continuation of residential use on the subject lots is consistent with the zoning on the site which allows multifamily residential uses as a conditional use and the General Plan designation which allows it as a secondary use. The proposed residential use is consistent with the overall buildout of the city under the General Plan. Development of the eastern parcel would require additional review and approval. The subject project, with mitigation and conditions, will be consistent with applicable policies including infill development, housing, mobility, design, energy, noise.