

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. This project was approved in May of 2022, and due to market and permitting issues the entitlement has expired. The applicants are re-applying for the Design Review approval and will be utilizing the existing determination of an exemption from Environmental Review, Building, Structural, Civil and Landscape plans. All have been previously approved and will be utilized without modification.

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 vacant parcels totaling 0.56 acres on the north side of Olive Drive, roughly 300 feet east of Richards Boulevard.

Description:

The project involves redevelopment of the site with 47 studio apartments and approximately 1,050 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, with a roof-top garden/gathering space for the resident's exclusive use. The apartment units will be relatively small, at 425 square feet. No specific commercial use is specified at this time, but the eventual commercial use will occupy the ground floor of that particular building. 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, those living on a fixed income, and possibly some students. This will be accomplished by constructing 3 three-story buildings consisting of 12, 15, and 18 stacked flat one-bedroom apartments in each, in addition a two-story building will be constructed with the commercial space below and two apartments above. The key to this is to reduce the number of residential parking spaces from 72 (pursuant to City code 40.25.090) down to just seven in order to cater the project to downtown workers, UC Davis employees, 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.

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 7 of the units as permanent Low-income housing units. There will also be four very low-income units along with three low-income units. This amounts to 15% of the provided units being guaranteed as affordable, with the balance of the units being market rate affordable. This is consistent with the required current number of affordable units. As the City's recent study has shown, (A. Plescia and Cop.; and 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. The applicants believe that this project can provide affordable products for the Low- and Moderate-income ranges without public subsidies. It is quite unusual that a market rate project will provide deed restricted affordable product, but the applicants wish to meet their obligations for this provision.

Consistency:

This project is quite simply a significant implementation of the local preference for housing supply as detailed in the General Plan. As mentioned above this application is for Design Review Approval, and intends to utilize the previously approved technical plans.