

11568 W Pico Blvd

BACKGROUND & FINDINGS



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PROJECT SUMMARY

The project site is located at 11568 W Pico Blvd in the Palms – Mar Vista – Del Rey Community Plan Area. The site consists of 3 lots (with APNs 426-003-4027 and -4036) with a total lot area of 8,282.6 square feet (or 0.19 acres) and is zoned C2-1VL with a General Plan Land Use designation of General Commercial. The project site is currently an automobile repair shop facility operating out of a single-story, 3,220 square foot building on the site. The Applicant proposes to demolish the existing structure to build the proposed development.

The proposed development is a new 5-story, 56-foot high multi-family residential building comprised of 29 studio units and 1 one-bedroom unit, with 3 units set aside for Extremely Low Income households. The 16,770 square foot structure includes ground and subterranean parking, with 24 automobile parking spaces and 30 bicycle parking spaces located within the parking garage. Proposed bicycle parking will comprise of 30 long-term spaces and 4 short-term spaces. Vehicular access to the subterranean and grade-level parking is provided at the rear of the structure through the alley. . Pedestrians, on the other hand, are offered two access points to the building. The main pedestrian entrance is located off Pico Blvd, giving the building a prominent sense of identity on its frontage. The second pedestrian entrance is located at the rear of the structure, next to the parking garage. The front of the structure has been thoughtfully designed with varying architectural features and treatment of the ground floor to enhance visual interest as well as the overall pedestrian experience and safety.

The proposed project includes a ground floor gym room and community deck on the fifth floor for use by the future residents. Furthermore, 26 of the units include private balconies designed in a unique visual pattern, making the building aesthetically interesting while putting “Eyes on the Street”, which is what Jane Jacobs theorized make neighborhoods safer and enhances the social fabric and vitality of a specific community¹. The surrounding neighborhood is characterized by highway-oriented commercial and mini-shopping centers along Pico Blvd. The proposed project is in an area that has seen an influx of high-density, mixed-use development on both Pico and Gateway Boulevards, making the subject location ideal for a multi-family project.

Proposed Development Program	
Development Standard	Proposed
Density	30 units
Height	56-feet
Square Footage	16,770 sq ft
Automobile Parking	24 stalls
Bicycle Parking	34 stalls
Open Space	3,000 sq ft

¹ “The Death and Life of Great American Cities” by Jane Jacobs published on December 1, 1992

REQUESTED ACTIONS

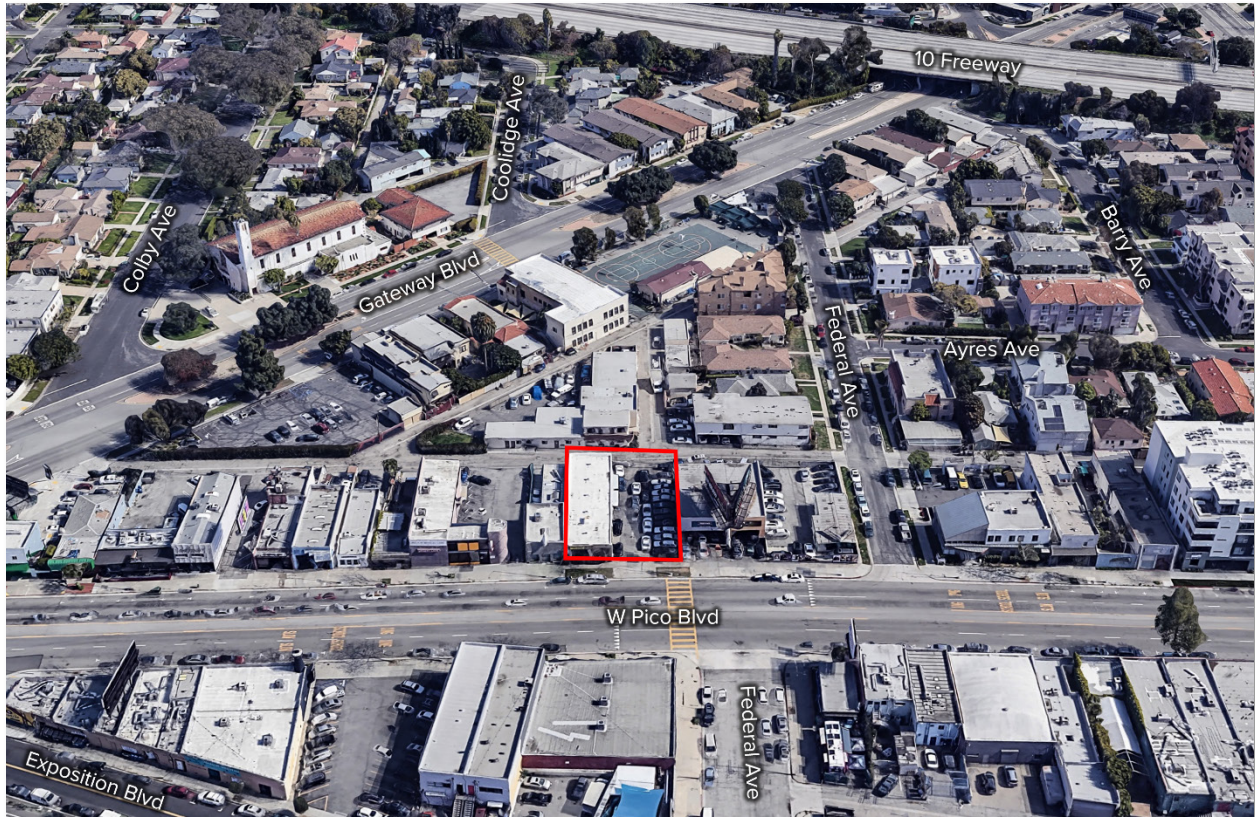
The following discretionary actions are requested:

1. Pursuant to LAMC Section 12.22.A.25(f)(4), a Density Bonus On-Menu Incentive to allow a 35% increase in floor area from 12,423.9 square feet (as limited by LAMC Section 12.21.1) to 12,772.26 square feet.
2. Pursuant to LAMC Section 12.22.A.25(f)(5), a Density Bonus On-Menu Incentive to allow a 1-story, 11-foot increase in height from 4-stories, 45-feet (as limited by LAMC Section 12.21.1) to 5-stories, 56-feet.
3. Pursuant to 13.08.E., a Design Overlay Plan Approval for a project in the West Pico Boulevard CDO.
4. An exemption from CEQA, pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15332, Class 32, that there is no substantial evidence demonstrating that an exception to the categorical exemption pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Site

The project site is located on three lots totaling 8,282.6 square feet at 11568 W Pico Blvd. The property is legally described as Lots 397-399 of Tract 5498 and include Accessor Parcel Numbers 426-003-4027 and -4036. The site fronts on W Pico Blvd, with approximately 75 feet of frontage, respectively. The Department of Building & Safety designates the frontage of the C2-1VL zoned lots on W Pico Blvd.



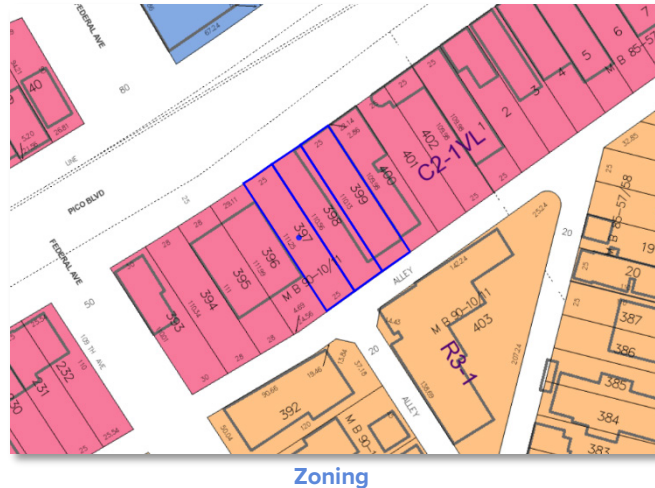
Aerial View of Subject Site

Existing Conditions & Historic Analysis

The site currently contains a single-story automobile repair facility. Research was carried out utilizing a variety of sources to identify if the existing apartment buildings had any potential historic considerations. In July of 2012 the Historic Resources Survey Report for the Palms-Mar Vista-Del Rey Community Plan Area was completed as part of the SurveyLA program for the City of Los Angeles. After review of the report and its subsections, Individual Resources, Non-Parcel Resources, Historic Districts, Planning Districts and Multi-Property Resources, no reference was found to the subject property. A review of the City of Los Angeles' Zone Information and Map Access System concludes that the existing improvements are not listed in any local, state or national register. Additionally, the subject property was searched against the City's Historic Places LA information system and no results were found that indicate the existing improvements contain any historic value.

The site is suitable for multi-family development and can easily accommodate the project due to its relatively flat topography, public street frontage, proximity to transit, and access to existing infrastructure, utilities, and services.

General Plan Land Use Designation and Zoning, Specific Plan, Supplemental Use District and Other Notable Boundaries



- Palms – Mar Vista – Del Rey Community Plan
 - The Plan designates the project site with the land use designations of General Commercial
 - The General Commercial land use designation allows the corresponding zones: C1.5, C2, C4, RAS3, and RAS4
 - The corresponding parcels are zoned C2-1VL, consistent with the land use designation
 - The General Plan Footnotes that apply to the site do not have any impact on the proposed development program
- Council District 11 (Mike Bonin)
- Transit Priority Area as defined by Section 21064.3 of the California State Public Resources Code
- West Pico Boulevard Community Design Overlay

There are no Supplemental Use Districts for the project site.

Streets and Circulation

	W Pico Blvd	Alley
Classification	Avenue I	Standard
Standard ½ ROW	50'	10'
Existing ½ ROW	50'	10'
Highway Dedication	None	None
Standard ½ Roadway	35'	10'
Existing ½ Roadway	35'	10'
Roadway Widening	None	None

The information in the table above was gathered from the Bureau of Engineering² and reflects the condition of the street that the project fronts on. Pursuant to the new Mobility Plan, the existing streets and alley are fully improved and need no dedication or widening to meet current standards. The project proposes all access to vehicular parking via the fully widened and improved alley, thus allowing W Pico Blvd to consist of visually interesting elements that are inviting to pedestrians.

² See Bureau of Engineering Inter-Departmental Correspondence dated July 6, 2020

Surrounding Properties

Direction	Zone	Use
North	CM-1VL	1-Story Commercial – Furniture Store
	CM-1VL	1-Story Commercial – Creative Warehouse
West	C2-1VL	1-Story Commercial – Auto Repair Shop
South	R3-1	6-story Residential – 40 units (beginning construction)
	R3-1	2-Story Residential – 9 units
East	C2-2	1-Story Commercial – Digital Imaging Shop

Previous Entitlements

None.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Use

The proposed project is a multi-family building consisting of 30 units within the C2-1VL zone, which is an allowable use for the zone.

Density

Development Standard	Permitted by Zone	Permitted by DB On-Menu @ 35%	Proposed
Density	23 units	32 units	30 units

The project site consists of three lots totaling 8,282.6 square feet. According to LAMC 12.22.C.16., the calculation of lot area (for the purposes of calculating density) is permitted to include one-half of the alley area. Including one-half of the adjacent alley area, the total lot area is 9,032.6 square feet, thus allowing 22.58 or 22 units on the site.

Density Bonus law, however, requires that the base density round-up for purposes of calculating the allowable density bonus. As such, a 35% density increase from the rounded up base density of 23 units to 32 units is allowed. Additionally, as part of the City's Density Bonus ordinance, an applicant must set-aside 11% of the base units of the project for Extremely Low-Income households. 11% of 23 results in 3 units, which the applicant will set-aside as Restricted Affordable Units.

Housing Replacement

As per the AB 2556 Replacement Unit Determination³, there are no replacement units required.

Height, Floor Area & Massing

Development Standard	Permitted without DB	Permitted with DB	Proposed
Height (feet/stories)	45' / unlimited	56' / unlimited	56' / 5-stories
FAR / Square Footage	1.5:1 / 12,423.9 sq ft	2.025:1 / 16,772.3 sq ft	2.025:1 / 16,770 sq ft

The subject site has a Height District of 1, which yields a Floor-to-Area Ratio (FAR) of 1.5:1 for the C2-1VL zone, based on the site's buildable area which is 8,282.6 square feet. The applicant is utilizing the Density Bonus On-Menu Incentive to increase the permitted FAR to 2.025:1 in the C2-1VL zone, resulting in the allowable floor area of 16,772.3 square feet.

The massing of the building features varied architectural treatments and materials that accentuate the building form. The design integrates smooth stucco, fiber-cement, LED lighting, and varied roof lines. Additionally, the building incorporates an asymmetric façade that evokes feelings of movement while the red entrance wall creates a balanced yet compelling composition. This ground floor entrance is decorated with landscaping to draw the attention of pedestrians on the street.

The proposed height of the building is 5-stories and 56-feet tall, consistent with the proposed On-Menu Density Bonus Incentive as well as other, newer mixed-use buildings that are recently built and being developed in the nearby vicinity.

³ AB 2556 Determination Memo, issued on June 25, 2020, recorded under HIMS #20-127373

Automobile Parking

The proposed project has 30 units, bringing the total parking required per AB 744 for the proposed project down to 15 stalls. The project exceeds that requirement by providing a total of 24 automobile stalls for the project. The automobile parking will be provided within the first and ground levels of the parking garage.

Bicycle Parking

LAMC 12.21.A.16. outlines the requirements for bicycle parking. For the subject 30-unit project, the required residential long-term bicycle parking is 28 stalls and the required short-term bicycle parking is 3 stalls. The project will exceed the required bicycle parking numbers by providing a total of 34 residential bicycle stalls (30 long-term & 4 short-term). The long-term bicycle stalls are provided on the first and ground levels of the parking garage. The short-term bicycle racks are located on the sidewalk in front of the lobby entrance off Pico Blvd.

Open Space & Landscaping

The open space for the required project is regulated by the Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 12.21.G. The LAMC requires 100 square feet of open space for each unit having less than three habitable rooms and 125 square feet for each unit having three habitable rooms. Based on the proposed number of units, the required open space is 3,000 square feet. The project proposes 3,000 square feet of open space detailed in the table below.

Open Space Area	Square Footage
Ground Floor Gym	750
5 th Floor Common Deck	950
Private Balconies	1,300
TOTAL	3,000

As for the landscaping, the Applicant proposes to keep the existing street tree and add another tree to the sidewalk per the City of LA street tree division. Furthermore, a total of seven 24” box trees will be planted throughout the entirety of the site. The public right of way will be improved with shrubs and groundcover.

Access

The pedestrian access for the project is provided off W Pico Blvd as well as the alley at the rear of the structure. The vehicular access is provided via a single driveway facing the alley. The Applicant proposes to close off the existing driveway and curb-cut on W Pico Blvd, which further enhances the pedestrian experience and safely in the public right of way.

DENSITY BONUS LEGISLATION

BACKGROUND

The California State Legislature has declared that "[t]he availability of housing is of vital statewide importance," and has determined that state and local governments have a responsibility to "make adequate provision for the housing needs of all economic segments of the community." Section §65580, subds. (a), (d). Section 65915 further provides that an Applicant must agree to, and the municipality must ensure, the "continued affordability of all low and very low-income units that qualified the Applicant" for the density bonus.

With Senate Bill 1818 (2004), state law created a requirement that local jurisdictions approve a density bonus and parking relief and up to three "concessions or incentives" for projects that include defined levels of affordable housing in their projects. In response to this requirement, the City created an ordinance that includes a menu of incentives (referred to as "on-menu" incentives) comprised of eight zoning adjustments that meet the definition of concessions or incentives in state law (California Government Code Section 65915). The eight on-menu incentives allow for: 1) reducing setbacks; 2) reducing lot coverage; 3) reducing lot width, 4) increasing floor area ratio (FAR); 5) increasing height; 6) reducing required open space; 7) allowing for an alternative density calculation that includes streets/alley dedications; and 8) allowing for "averaging" of FAR, density, parking or open space. In order to grant approval of an on-menu incentive, the City utilizes the same findings contained in state law for the approval of incentives or concessions. The incentives are deviations from the City's development standards, thus providing greater relief from regulatory constraints. Utilization of the Density Bonus/Affordable Housing Incentives Program supersedes requirements of the Los Angeles Municipal Code and underlying ordinances relative to density, number of units, parking, and other requirements relative to incentives, if requested.

Under Government Code Section § 65915(a), § 65915(d)(2)(C) and § 65915(d)(3) the City of Los Angeles complies with the State Density Bonus law by adopting density bonus regulations and procedures as codified in Section 12.22 A.25 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code. Section 12.22 A.25 creates a procedure to waive or modify zoning code standards which may prevent, preclude or interfere with the effect of the density bonus by which the incentive or concession is granted, including legislative body review. The Ordinance must apply equally to all new residential development. If the on-menu incentives cannot provide the necessary relief from development regulations, waivers from the regulations can be requested pursuant to LAMC 12.22.A.25(g).

DENSITY BONUS FINDINGS

1. The project complies with the following criteria required by Section 12.22A25(e)(2) of the LAMC for Housing Development Projects requesting on-menu incentives:

a) The façade of any portion of a building that abuts a street shall be articulated with a change of material or a break in plane, so that the façade is not a flat surface.

The façade of the proposed project will feature a variety of different materials and changes in plane to ensure that the façade will not be a flat surface. Materials used for the proposed building facade fronting on Pico Boulevard will feature a thoughtful blend of the following materials:

- Two colors of smooth stucco
- fiber-cement for the western portion of the façade
- Translucent glass for the exposed balconies
- Landscape screen for the 5th floor common deck
- Silver aluminum anodized doors and windows
- Embedded LED light fixtures

The materials are used in combination with each other to prevent any architectural element from being monotonous. While the building is relatively thin at just over 57 feet wide compared to other new development sites, the variety of materials used, and façade articulation significantly breaks up the massing of the building. The architectural placement of materials differentiates key components of the façade while tying together the design as a whole. For example, the fiber-cement on the western portion of the façade not only reveals appealing sight lines but also prevents what is typically a solid stucco exterior. The breaks in the center of the facade create an illusion of movement, ensuring that at any angle the building is viewed, there is no perception of a flat surface. Other accents, such as the thoughtfully placed planters, embedded LED light fixtures and red walls, all contribute to a collection of design elements that prevents the structure and façade from being repetitive and aesthetically mundane, but rather an articulated plane that is interesting to the eye and enhances the scale and interest of the building's frontage.

b) 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 elevation.

The proposed building very clearly fronts on Pico Blvd, as evidenced by the location of the main pedestrian entrance. The pedestrian entrance to the residential lobby on the ground floor has been flagged by a rich burgundy color that serves to distinguish it from the rest of the building. However, the majority of the residential windows and balconies face east.

The project's façade incorporates large, floor-to-ceiling windows in a manner that brings residential activity to the public view. The architectural features utilized for the frontage, such as the changes in building materials, the placement of windows and planters, and the distinctive articulation of the exterior, all serve to fortify the project's orientation toward Pico Blvd.

- c) **The Housing Development Project shall not involve a contributing structure in a designated Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) and shall not involve a structure that is a City of Los Angeles designated Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM).**

The project is not located within a designated Historic Preservation Overlay Zone, nor does it involve a property that is designated as a City Historic-Cultural Monument.

- d) **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 57.25.01 of the LAMC.**

The Housing Development Project is not located on a substandard street in a Hillside Area, nor is it located in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.

2. Following is a delineation of the findings and the application of relevant facts as related the request for (2) On-Menu Incentives to allow for the construction, use and maintenance of a five-story, multi-family building containing 30 residential units and 24 automobile parking spaces across (3) contiguous lots totaling 8,282.6 square feet in size. Pursuant to section 12.22 A.25(g) of the LAMC and Government Code Section 65915, the Director shall approve a Density Bonus and requested Incentive(s) unless the Director finds that:

- 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.**

The proposed project substantially complies with the applicable regulations, standards and provisions of the State Density Bonus Program. The Applicant is proposing to provide three units, or 11% of the permitted base density of the project, as Extremely Low Income restricted affordable unit, which permits two On-Menu Incentives to increase the floor area maximum by 35% and to increase the height by 11-feet and 1-story. With a base permitted density of 23 units, a 35% density bonus would allow for 9 additional units, for a total of 32 units, which the applicant will not fully utilize. The proposed project represents an urban infill development on a site that is appropriate for such a multifamily residential project, both in terms of zoning and location, as it will be compatible with surrounding zones and uses in the area.

On-Menu Incentives

FAR and Height: The Applicant has requested On-Menu Incentives pursuant to LAMC Section 12.22.A.25.(g)(3) to permit a maximum FAR of 2.025:1 in lieu of the 1.5:1 maximum FAR permitted in the C2-1VL Zone, as well as to increase the height to 56-feet, in lieu of the 45-foot maximum per the C2-1VL zone

The list of on-menu incentives in LAMC Section 12.22.A.25 were pre-evaluated at the time the Density Bonus Ordinance was adopted to include types of relief that minimize restrictions on the size of the project. As such, the Department will always arrive at the conclusion that the density bonus on-menu incentives are required to provide for affordable housing costs because the incentives by their nature increase the scale of the project.

The incentives are necessary to provide the financial means and construction scaling to set aside the required number of affordable units and to construct the density bonus units. The requested increase in floor area and height are necessary to expand the project's building envelope so that the proposed restricted affordable units will be of equal size, have the same number of bedrooms, and feature the same amenities and quality that are required to be incorporated into the set-aside units. In addition, the increased floor plate and expanded envelope allows the Applicant to provide for reasonably sized units and additional density. As such, the increase in floor area, lot coverage and height allow for additional floor area and an expanded envelope that offset such costs.

Therefore, the Incentive can be found to provide identifiable and actual cost reductions to accommodate for affordable housing costs as defined in California Health and Safety Code Section 50052.5 or Section 50053 for rents for the affordable units.

- b) The Incentive will have a specific adverse impact upon public health and safety or the physical environment, or on any real property that is listed in the California Register of Historical Resources and for which there are no feasible method to satisfactorily mitigate or avoid the specific adverse impact without rendering the development unaffordable to Very Low, Low and Moderate Income households. Inconsistency with the zoning ordinance or the general plan land use designation shall not constitute a specific, adverse impact upon the public health or safety.**

The proposed Project and potential impacts were analyzed in accordance with the City's Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines and the City's L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide. These two documents establish guidelines and thresholds of significant impact and provide the data for determining whether the impacts of a proposed Project reach or exceed those thresholds. A Class 32 Categorical Exception was prepared to demonstrate the lack of impact the proposed Project will create. There is no substantial evidence in the record that the proposed incentives will have a specific adverse impact on the physical environment, on public health and safety, and on property listed in the California Register of Historic Resources. A "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" (LAMC Section 12.22.A.25(b)). As required by Section 12.22 A.25 (e)(2), the project meets the eligibility criterion that is required for density bonus projects. The project also does not involve a contributing structure in a designated Historic Preservation Overlay Zone or on the City of Los Angeles list of Historical-Cultural Monuments. Therefore, there is no substantial evidence that the proposed incentives will have a specific adverse impact on public health and safety.

The site in which the project is being built is a relatively small-sized parcel that is comprised of three very skinny lots totaling 8,282.6 square feet (or 0.19 acres) in area, which is well under the 5-acre threshold and serves no value for endangered, rare or threatened species. The site is also situated in a well-established neighborhood with adequate infrastructure that can serve all the required utilities and public services that a 30-unit building would demand. Lastly, the project does not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality or water quality as evidenced by the letter dated July 6, 2020, which serves as the explanation of how the project complies with the five conditions listed for qualifying for the Categorical Exemption. Therefore, there is no substantial evidence that the proposed project will have a Specific Adverse Impact on the physical environment, on public health and safety, and on property listed in the California Register of Historical Resources.

WEST PICO BLVD COMMUNITY DESIGN OVERLAY FINDINGS

1. The project substantially complies with the adopted Community Design Overlay Guidelines and Standards.

The project involves the redevelopment of an automobile repair facility into a new multi-family building that will include market-rate and affordable housing units.

Standard 4: Articulation

There is a mix of architectural styles along Pico Blvd, and the proposed project is designed in a modern architectural style. The street fronting façade incorporates projections and breaks in plane to provide variation to the massing of the building. The asymmetric window design and metal cladding help to achieve an eclectic aesthetic that is a characteristic of industrial-modern architecture. The massing of the building is broken up by changes in color, texture, and materials. The styles and architectural features are consistent with a modern-industrial character and compatible with the character of surrounding buildings, notably the newer built mixed-use developments less than half a mile to the west of the subject site. The primary pedestrian entrance is located along Pico Blvd thereby activating the street frontage and enhancing the pedestrian experience along this commercial corridor. The burgundy inset entry consists of a modern metal and glass doorway, as well as other welcoming residential features such as a planter boxes, an intercom system, and LED security lighting. The residential units are differentiated from the ground floor with the use of balconies, differentiated colors and materials, and window fenestration.

Standard 7: Window Security Grilles and Chain Link Fences

There are no exterior security grilles or chain link fences proposed as part of the project.

Standard 9: Mechanical Equipment/Trash

All rooftop equipment will be screened from view and trash bins will be contained within the building.

Standard 10: Surface Materials

The exterior façade includes only a few different complementary materials: smooth stucco, anodized aluminum, and glass. There are no stark colors, except for the red which was chosen specifically to give the residential entry a prominent identity.

Standard 14: Landscaping

The proposed project includes landscape planters at the residential entry to invite and welcome residents, as well as landscape planters along the ground floor that serve to soften the boundaries of the building. The project proposes to plant a total of seven 24" box trees to the ground floor, in addition to the existing street tree. Lastly, the fifth-floor open space deck features landscaping that will also be visible from the public right-of-way (alley) from certain angles.

Standard 17 and 19: Signage

The proposed project includes one building identification sign comprised of individual channel letters 15" inches in height and not greater than 4 square feet in total area. The signage is back-lit and appears to be hung from the canopy line directly above the signage, but is technically a wall sign.

2. The structures, site plan and landscaping are harmonious in scale and design with existing development and any cultural, scenic or environmental resources adjacent to the site and in the vicinity.

The project is conditioned to comply with the CDO requirements and will be compatible with the existing commercial, residential, and institutional development along Pico Blvd. Several other multi-family projects along this stretch of Pico Blvd are either already built, under construction, or almost done with permits. The project introduces residential space with primary entrances along Pico Blvd, all with large windows, where there is currently an auto repair facility next to a surface parking lot. The proposed project is harmonious in scale and design with existing development and will activate a semi-utilized site along Pico Blvd. There are no cultural, scenic, or environmental resources in vicinity of the proposed project.