



CITY OF LONG BEACH

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

411 West Ocean Boulevard, 3rd Floor • Long Beach, CA 90801 • (562) 570-6194

September 9, 2019

CHAIR AND CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSIONERS
City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

A Certificate of Appropriateness to construct a two-story, three-unit residential development located at 29 Kennebec Avenue. The proposed development will consist of three residential dwelling units each with a two-car garage designed in a Mediterranean architectural style. The property is located in the Bluff Park Historic District. (District 3)

APPLICANT: Ramin Favakehi
2555 Pieper Lane
Tustin, Ca 92782
(Application No. COAC1901-01)

THE REQUEST

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness to construct a two-story, three-unit residential development located at 29 Kennebec Avenue.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The subject site, 29 Kennebec Avenue, is located at the southwest corner of Kennebec Avenue and 1st Street (Exhibit A – Location Map). The site currently consists of a 150' x 100' (15,000-square-foot) parcel located within the Three-Family Residential, Small Lot (R-3-S) zoning district. The General Plan designation for this area is Land Use District No. 4 – High-Density Residential. This subject property is located in the Coastal Zone and the Bluff Park Historic Landmark District, originally adopted in 1982 (Ordinance No. C-5869) and amended in 1990 (Ordinance No. C-6835) (Exhibit B – Bluff Park Historic District Ordinance).

The subject property is bounded by Kennebec Avenue to the east, 1st Street to the north, an alley to the south and a multifamily residence to the west. The site features a berm which extends across the perimeter of the property, along both Kennebec Avenue and 1st Street. The property is approximately 4-feet above grade (from top of curb) and is otherwise relatively flat. The northern portion of the lot is vacant. The southern portion of the lot is developed with a two-story duplex, and a detached two-car garage with a dwelling unit above that were built in 1939. There is an approved parcel map that

subdivides the property, which is not yet final. The proposed project would be constructed on the vacant, northern portion of the property. The existing 1939 building and detached garage on the southerly portion of the property would remain.

Photographic evidence documented that the vacant (northern) portion of the site was developed with a two-story, single family residence which faced Kennebec Avenue. The original curb cut still remains along Kennebec Ave. Over time, this structure was demolished. A record search was conducted to determine when the structure was demolished, but no records were found. (Exhibit C- Photo of Original House).

ANALYSIS

The applicant is proposing to construct a new two-story residential building consisting of three dwelling units, each with a two-car garage located on the northerly portion of a 15,000 square foot. The proposed project will consist of three dwelling units (townhouse style), ranging in size from 1,570 to 1,600 square feet in size with their respective garages. (Exhibit E – Plans).

On December 6, 2018, the Planning Commission approved Tentative Parcel Map No. 82376 and a Local Coastal Development Permit which permitted the subdivision of the lot (Exhibit D – Tentative Parcel Map). The subdivision created two separate parcels: Lot 1 – an 85' X 100' (8,500 square feet) vacant (northern) parcel, and Lot 2 – a 65' X 100' (6,500 square feet) (southern) parcel developed with an existing two-story duplex and detached two-car garage with a dwelling unit above. Los Angeles County recordation of the final map for the subdivision is currently in progress.

The property fronts on two streets, Kennebec Avenue and 1st Street. Based on the Zoning Code definition, the narrower street width determines the location of front yard of the lot. Prior to the subdivision, the front yard was considered to be along 1st Street. The approval of the subdivision created different lot dimensions resulting in Kennebec Avenue being the front yard of the newly subdivided northerly lot.

The proposed project is designed as one single structure measuring approximately 50'-0" wide by 65'-0" long with two units taking their front entry from 1st Street and one unit taking its front entry from Kennebec Avenue. In accordance with the Zoning Code regulations, Kennebec Avenue serves as the front yard, and the Code further requires a 15'-0" front yard setback in the R-3-S zoning district. The zoning of the property also requires side yard setbacks of 10% the lot width (a minimum of 8 ½ feet) and a 20'-0" rear yard setback. The plans illustrate that the new building will comply with Code required setbacks, as the new building will maintain a 15'-0" front yard setback (along Kennebec), a 15'-0" street side yard setback (along 1st Street), a 20'-0" (interior) side yard setback and a 20'-0" rear yard setback on the west side of the building.

A 25'-0" special setback was established along 1st Street, between Junipero and Loma Avenues. This special setback requires new construction to be setback a minimum of 25'-0" distance from the property line adjacent to 1st Street. The applicant is seeking relief

from this special setback in order to construct the project with a 15'-0" setback along 1st Street (rather than 25') to accommodate the desired unit sizes as well as parking and driveway dimensions that are consistent with Code. Per the Zoning Code, the reduction of the special setback on 1st Street is not in the purview of the Cultural Heritage Commission; the applicant will have to pursue another discretionary action, to be considered by a different decision-making body, to eliminate the special setback requirement. Consequently, Cultural Heritage Commission approval of the project would be contingent upon a future discretionary action to remove the special setback, and the proposed project, is conditioned as such.

The building will be designed in a Mediterranean architectural style. The two-story building will feature smooth stucco walls and Spanish roof tile. The Kennebec elevation features a prominent arched entryway, wall plane projections and a variety of square, rectangle and arched windows. The 1st Street elevation features wall plane projections, two balconies each located above prominent protruding entryways, and a variety of square, rectangle and arched windows. The south elevation features a cantilevered second-floor that extends the entire length of the building and two balconies on the second-story facade. The building features a combination of gable and hip roof systems and private, individual roof decks above each of the units. The elevations illustrate the use of a variety of window shapes: rectangular, square, and arched. Staff is recommending that the plans be modified to create a more cohesive fenestration style, rhythm, and pattern for the entire building. The plans illustrate the use of a variety of window trim (surround) styles which similarly do not convey a unified design concept that is complementary to the overall style of the building. To address this issue, a condition has been placed on the proposed project requiring the applicant to submit revised elevations and a window schedule that provides more detail about the materials, rhythm, shape, and grouping of the windows, including window manufacturer specifications, during the plan check process and prior to the issuance of building permits. The condition also requires that the windows be recessed a minimum of four inches, be made of high quality materials, and feature a uniform trim. The applicant is advised to consult the City of Long Beach's Mediterranean Revival Style Guide for guidance with respect to appropriate window treatments. The style guide encourages multi-light casement windows (which are shown on proposed plans) that are arranged in pairs and are either arched or rectangular (but not typically both). The guide also notes that the window surrounds of Mediterranean-style structures "are typically absent or consist of simple wood surrounds."

The plans illustrate that the building will feature cream colored stucco, light brown trim and darker brown windows and doors. As is common practice, a condition of approval requires the applicant to obtain necessary review of and approvals for the exterior paint colors prior to final sign-off and issuance of building permits.

The zoning code limits the building to two stories and 25'-0" in height. As the plans illustrate, the building is proposed with two stories and height of 25'-0". A roof deck is proposed for each of the residential units. The roof deck is located behind parapet walls and is thus designed to be screened from view. With the exception of the special setback on 1st Street, the project complies with the Zoning Code and other applicable regulations.

Per Condition No. 7, the applicant will be required to pursue a subsequent discretionary process to eliminate the 25-foot special setback requirement. If relief is granted from that requirement, as noted above, the project would otherwise comply with the setback requirements of the R-3-S zone.

Community feedback on the project highlighted the importance of having the 1st Street frontage function and appear as the front of the property, consistent with other properties on the block and the historic orientation of the site. Likewise, neighborhood input emphasized the importance of retaining the driveway on the Kennebec Avenue side of the property, again consistent with where vehicular access was taken historically. To achieve these objectives, the project is designed so that two of the three units take their primary pedestrian access from 1st Street. Furthermore, as the site plan illustrates, the proposed design maintains the site's vehicular access from Kennebec Avenue. The original drive approach will be eliminated, and a new driveway approach will be installed that is consistent with today's standards and the precise dimensions and location of the driveway. The new driveway which separates the two lots along the south property line, will measure 80'-0" long by 20'-0" wide.

The plans illustrate a pedestrian walkway leading to an entry door located on Kennebec and two separate pedestrian walkways leading to entry doors located on 1st Street. A set of low walls flank each of the pedestrian walkways. Staff is recommending that the low walls be eliminated to maintain the open front yard design characteristic of the Bluff Park neighborhood. A low wall (per the plans) may be retained adjacent to the minimal stairs that lead to the entry threshold but should otherwise be eliminated. Staff recommends utilizing landscaping to highlight the pedestrian walkways instead of the low walls for greater neighborhood compatibility.

Compatibility with Neighborhood

The new building was designed to be compatible with the Bluff Park Historic District Ordinance and the Design Guidelines and complement the neighborhood at large. The new building will be visually integrated into the neighborhood and the design of the building will not negatively impact the appearance or character of the neighborhood. The new building has been designed to provide uniform setbacks along Kennebec Avenue and 1st Street. While the Bluff Park neighborhood is characterized by deep, unobstructed front yards, that condition typically exists in the area east of Kennebec Avenue and in those areas of the neighborhood that have more of a single-family character. Even with the reduced setback (reduced from the special setback requirement) on 1st Street, the new building will generally be aligned with the adjacent building to the west. Generally, the properties on the southside of block of 1st between Junipero and Kennebec Avenues have varying front yard setbacks; these properties also typically have retaining walls and/or landscaping within the front yard setback that break the appearance of deep setbacks found elsewhere in the neighborhood and, in particular, to the east of the subject site. In addition, the building provides a large (20'-0") setback on the west and south property lines, creating greater buffering/distance from adjacent contributing structures in the district.

The proposed building is designed in the Mediterranean architectural style. The building features a simple rectangular shape capped entirely with a second floor. The building's form and scale are compatible with the form and scale of the adjacent two-story buildings and other two-story buildings found within Bluff Park.

The Bluff Park Historic Ordinance states that "Construction...shall conform to the bulk, mass, scale, and height of the majority of existing structures on both sides of the block...The style of architecture, use of materials...shall not be uncharacteristically different from the predominant style of the immediate surroundings." The new two-story, multifamily building is compatible with the existing neighborhood development patterns, specifically, with the existing buildings located on the south side of 1st Street between Junipero and Kennebec Avenues. The adjacent building (west of the property), and the existing building located on the southerly portion of the subject site (Lot 2) are both two-stories in height and are similar multifamily developments. Majority of the properties located along this block of 1st Street feature stucco exteriors and a variety of roof styles.

The Bluff Park Design Guidelines specify that:

"new construction should be generally compatible with the existing contributing buildings in size, scale, setbacks, height massing, design, materials and architectural style to protect the overall character of the historic district...New construction is expected to reasonably blend in...The contributing residences within the Bluff Park Historic District are varied in style, but they are primarily two stories in height. New construction should include features like a gabled, pitched or flat roof with a parapet, wood or stucco cladding, tradition decorative features, prominent porches, rectangular windows and door openings and conform to the prevailing height and setback in the district, especially that of the contributing properties immediately adjacent to the proposed new construction."

Consistent with the above, the new building has been designed similar to the adjacent property and the properties located on the same block of 1st Street. The new building will "blend in" and be compatible in size, mass, and scale to the existing buildings within the district. The new building features stucco walls, rectangular shaped windows, and clay roof tiles. The building has been conditioned to incorporate specific design features such as recessed windows and to work with staff to develop a more cohesive design for the project's windows and doors during the plan check process.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff has analyzed the proposed project and has determined that the project, subject to conditions, meets the requirements set forth in Title 21 of the City's Zoning Code Section 2.63.080 (Cultural Heritage Commission) of the Long Beach Municipal Code, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, and the Bluff Park Historic District Ordinance (Ordinance Nos. C-5869 and C-6835).

The Cultural Heritage Commission shall only issue a certificate of appropriateness if it is determined that the new building:

- Will not adversely affect any significant historical, cultural, architectural, or aesthetic feature of the Landmark or subject property within the Landmark District and that issuance of the certificate of appropriateness is consistent with the spirit and intent of this Chapter.
- Will remedy any condition determined to be imminently dangerous or unsafe by the Fire Marshal and/or Building Official.
- Will comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings.
- Will comply with the Design Guidelines for Landmark Districts, for a property located within a Landmark District.

The project site is currently vacant. The proposed project has been designed specifically to conform to the requirements of the Bluff Park Historic District Ordinance and is consistent to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and will comply with the Design Guidelines for Bluff Park. All the findings can be made in the affirmative for the proposed new two-story multifamily development. (Exhibit F – Findings). Staff is recommending approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness subject to the conditions of approval (Exhibit G - Conditions of Approval).

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

In accordance with Section 15301(e), Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this project was found to be exempt from further environmental review.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Public notices were distributed on August 26, 2019 and a notice was mailed to the Bluff Park Neighborhood Association.

CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

September 9, 2019

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Respectfully submitted,



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PROJECT PLANNER



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CK:PD:ap:gc

- Attachments:
- Exhibit A – Location Map
 - Exhibit B – Bluff Park Historic District Ordinance
 - Exhibit C - Original House Photo
 - Exhibit D – Tentative Parcel Map
 - Exhibit E - Plans
 - Exhibit F – Findings
 - Exhibit G – Conditions of Approval