

SITE PLAN REVIEW FINDINGS

421 E. 4th Street

Application No. 2404-11 (SPR24-038)

October 17, 2024

Pursuant to Section 21.25.506 of the Long Beach Municipal Code, the Site Plan Review Committee or Planning Commission shall not approve a Site Plan Review unless the following findings are made. These findings and staff analysis are presented for consideration, adoption, and incorporation into the record of proceedings:

1. THE DESIGN IS HARMONIOUS, CONSISTENT AND COMPLETE WITHIN ITSELF AND IS COMPATIBLE IN DESIGN, CHARACTER AND SCALE WITH NEIGHBORING STRUCTURES AND THE COMMUNITY IN WHICH IT IS LOCATED:

The Applicant proposes to construct a multi-family residential project consisting of 96 micro-units (twelve [12] of which are affordable [very-low income]) with associated vehicle and bicycle parking spaces, and open space areas at 421 E. 4th Street in the Downtown Plan (PD-30) Planned Development District. The project site is located on the north side of E. 4th Street, between Linda Avenue and Elm Avenue Street. The site is bounded by N Frontenac Ct, a named alley, on the east. The site is currently developed with a surface parking lot with no structures. One (1) mural is painted on the west elevation of the adjacent building on the east. Adjacent uses are typical of the downtown setting and include multi-family residential, commercial, and mixed-use buildings.

The neighboring buildings in the vicinity of the project site vary in height, including single- and multi-story structures. Multi-story buildings are located across 4th Street and to the west and north of the property.

The proposed project would replace an existing surface parking lot with an eight-story building (80-foot-high). Design quality and architectural expression is consistent with the highest goals of the Downtown Plan for building design and architecture. The project's architecture incorporates high-quality exterior building materials, architectural elements, and color variations that vary across the proposed building elevations. Architectural design treatments are carried throughout all elevations. The building consists primarily of cement plaster and metal panels in varying medium and form across the building. Along the front, the majority of the south elevation maintains seven-stories of a flat façade in a teal color scheme with light-blue, glass, projecting balconies and an elevated, partially enclosed, communal roof-top deck that provides articulation. A blocky façade design is broken apart by architectural protrusions on portions of the west and north elevations to accent the verticality of the building and provide relief from the dominant color scheme. As for the east elevation, which contains primarily flat

facade, the project proposes angled windows and color variations to soften the facade appearance. As noted in the Downtown Plan, the building incorporates a design approach that creates an interplay between the one and three-dimensional elements of the building.

The ground level parking area would be constructed of poured-in-place concrete in a natural grey finish. The proposed windows, including the ground floor storefront system would maintain black vinyl windows throughout. The private balcony areas would maintain painted steel guardrails in a “Below Zero” (light blue) color to provide a pop of color from the overall blue building tone.

The project site is in the height incentive area of the Downtown Plan area, which intends for high intensity development featuring a combination of land uses including retail, offices, and higher density residential uses. The proposed multi-family residential project is consistent with the intent of the zoning district and the objective to develop a downtown that emphasizes a quality physical environment, a pedestrian focus, and quality architecture. Further, the project is anticipated to provide new housing opportunities to Long Beach residents and contribute to alleviate the state-wide housing shortage.

The project is designed to conform with all applicable development standards of the Downtown Plan document and is consistent with the level and intensity of development intended for the site.

2. THE DESIGN CONFORMS TO ANY APPLICABLE SPECIAL DESIGN GUIDELINES ADOPTED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION OR SPECIFIC PLAN REQUIREMENTS, SUCH AS THE DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR R-3 AND R-4 MULTI-FAMILY DEVELOPMENT, THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES, PD GUIDELINES OR THE GENERAL PLAN:

The site is located within the Downtown (DT) General Plan Land Use PlaceType Downtown, which is intended for compliance with the development standards for the Downtown Plan document. The Downtown Plan (PD-30) Planned Development District was adopted by City Council in January 2012. The Downtown Plan area is divided into a Downtown Plan area and a Downtown Neighborhood Overlay district. The project site is located in the height incentive area of the Downtown Plan area, which intends for a combination of land uses including retail, offices, and higher density residences. The project site is located within a transit-rich environment in proximity to regional and local transit and active transportation infrastructure, including LB Transit bus stops, the Long Beach Transit Gallery, Metro A Line, and Class IV separated bike lanes.

The Downtown Plan includes design guidelines and policies related to the high-quality design requirements of the planned development plan. The site is located within the Height Incentive and 6-foot setback area of the Downtown Plan. The proposed design conforms to the special design guidelines outlined in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 of the Downtown Plan document. These guidelines set standards for build-to lines, street walls, pedestrian paseos, form and massing, materials and finish, and overall quality of development.

The project design, as discussed above, consists of high-quality architecture and materials choices, and complies with the requirements of the design guidelines. The project establishes a pedestrian-friendly environment. The single building has a cohesive design theme and will use quality, durable materials. Visual relief is provided vertically through the mix of materials and architectural treatments. The project follows the Downtown Plan's recommended materials palette by building type and uses materials and color to create variation in form and massing. The building exhibits the most detail at the west and south sides of the building and makes a positive contribution to the street wall with unique architectural elevations on the frontage. In all, the finish, texture, and color of the design is compatible with the PD-30 design guidelines.

In addition, the project includes micro-units in conformance with Section 21.45.600 of the Long Beach Municipal Code (LBMC). The project is comprised of micro-units and is therefore being facilitated through compliance with the micro-unit ordinance (21.45.600 of the LBMC) and all applicable PD-30 standards. The project would provide a combination of indoor and outdoor common open space areas for the residents of the proposed project. In addition, the project design provides a communal deck, private balconies, and indoor amenity areas are provided beyond the minimum required. It is worth noting, however, that while each unit contains a closet and/or alcove space for storage, many of these spaces do not meet the minimum area noted in the PD-30 plan (25 square feet in area, not less than 175 cubic feet). Staff attempted to work with the applicant to increase the provided storage space, but were unsuccessful due to a technicality in the way the requirement related to storage is written in the current plan, which as written may not be considered an objective standard. Staff will be addressing this issue as part of the PD-30 update. Nevertheless, as designed, the project meets the intent of the micro-unit pilot program to increase housing production in areas of the City that are amenity-rich and located near quality public transit systems.

The proposed rental housing development is in alignment with the Land Use, Urban Design, and Housing Elements of the General Plan, including objective design standards, as well as architectural and green building standards.

The Land Use Element (LUE) identifies goals and policies along with PlaceType descriptions to guide the use of land and urban form. The goals, strategies and policies outlined in the LUE describe how the City will continue to pursue innovative land use practices aimed at maintaining the small town feel of neighborhoods while also capitalizing on big city attributes. The proposed project includes infill residential development in the downtown area within walking distance to multiple modes of transportation, including the Metro A Line 5th Street Station and Long Beach Transit bus stops (LU Policies 1-2, 7-9, and 13-2). The development of high-density residential uses in proximity to transit furthers the City's goal to develop the Downtown into a city center that provides compact development, accommodates new growth and creates a walkable urban environment accessible to surrounding neighborhoods and regional facilities (LU Policy 7-7). The proposed project would eliminate a surface parking lot and widen the existing alley way by 2 feet to ensure safe ingress and egress. The new residential building would include a residential lobby and bicycle storage with direct access to E. 4th Street to activate the building frontage, while also providing convenient access to the public realm along the improved right-of-way. In addition, the project is comprised of micro-units, which are anticipated to provide an affordable rental housing solution for single-person households (LU Policy 12-1). The provision of 12 affordable housing units to very-low-income households exceeds the projections for this site identified in the site inventory in the City's 6th Cycle Housing Element of the General Plan. Therefore, the project achieves the City's intent to encourage the provision of housing opportunities for all income levels and household types (LU Policy 12-2).

The City's Housing Plan of the Housing Element, organized by goals, policies and programs was adopted as part of the City's housing strategy for the 6th Cycle planning period (2021-2029). The Housing Plan describes the City's directions on housing related needs. In reviewing this project, City staff found that increased opportunities for the construction of high-quality housing (Housing Plan Goal 1) were achieved. In accordance with Housing Element (HE) Policy 1.2, 1.5, 1.7, 1.11, 1.12 and 1.13 the approval process was streamlined, high-quality materials were encouraged, development aligned with the City's Climate Action Plan was encouraged downtown, inclusionary housing, enhanced density bonuses and incentives were applied to promote mixed income and/or mixed generation housing. Furthermore, City staff mitigated government constraints on housing investment and affordability (Housing Plan Goal 2). Specially, HE Policies 2.2, 2.5, 2.7 and Program 2.5 were met via a speedy review of applications, reduction in minimum unit size, streamlined environmental review and application of the Micro-Unit Pilot Program. The parcel(s) (APN: 7281-007-081 & 7281-007-065) of the

subject site are not identified on the site inventory in the City's 6th Cycle Housing Element of the General Plan, so the development of housing at this site could help to counter-balance future development of inventory sites that may be approved with fewer units than was projected.

The proposed multi-family residential project is consistent with the intent of PD-30, micro-unit ordinance, the general plan, and the objective to develop a downtown that emphasizes a quality physical environment, a pedestrian focus, and quality architecture. The project encourages pedestrian activity by placing the lobby and bicycle storage along the E. 4th Street frontage. These areas feature large storefront systems and windows with visibility onto the street and public realm. The additional housing units will contribute to the alleviation of the state-wide housing shortage, including twelve (12) affordable units at the very-low-income level.

3. THE DESIGN WILL NOT REMOVE SIGNIFICANT MATURE TREES OR STREET TREES, UNLESS NO ALTERNATIVE DESIGN IS POSSIBLE.

The site is currently developed with a surface parking lot with no structures. Ornamental vegetation (Five [5] trees and associated planter areas) exist on the private property (project site). The existing trees located in public right-of-way are expected to remain after construction whereas the five (5) existing onsite trees would be removed to accommodate the project. No alternative design would allow for development of the site under the PD-30 development standards. As conditioned, the modification and removal of trees shall be in conformance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). As conditioned, street trees abutting the site shall be added in conformance with the amount and species outlined in the PD-30 landscaping provisions and pursuant to Section 21.42.050 of the LBMC. The installation of new street trees consistent with applicable standards will provide a perimeter of broad, leafy shade canopies around the project site.

4. THERE IS AN ESSENTIAL NEXUS BETWEEN THE PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT REQUIREMENTS ESTABLISHED BY THE ORDINANCE AND THE LIKELY IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT; AND

The project improvements include improvements within the public right-of-way to support site access and facilitate buildout of the project area in conformance with the Downtown Plan. Improvements within the public right-of-way would be subject to review by the City of Long Beach Department of Public Works. As conditioned, all improvements within the public right-of-way shall be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to allow for site access and connectivity

within the project vicinity. The improvements within the public realm would provide access to the site and around the perimeter of the site.

Improvements to the public right-of-way adjacent to the project site also include a 2-foot dedication at the eastern alley (N Frontenac Court) as required by the LBMC. The widened alley will be used as vehicular access to the proposed parking area. In addition to ADA-compliant sidewalks, curbs, intersection improvements adjacent to the project, existing curb cuts along E. 4th Street would be closed and street trees installed adjacent to the project site. Street trees and associated irrigation systems will be installed along the E. 4th Street frontage adjacent to the project site, which will soften the street-side pedestrian experience.

The proposed project would include substantial obligations to improve connectivity for public access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles in conformance with the Downtown Plan, Metro, and Public Works requirements.

5. THE PROJECT CONFORMS WITH ALL REQUIREMENTS SET FORTH IN CHAPTER 21.64 (TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT), WHICH REQUIREMENTS ARE SUMMARIZED IN TABLE 25-1 AS FOLLOWS:

TDM Requirements	New Nonresidential Development		
	25,000+ Square Feet	50,000+ Square Feet	100,000+ Square Feet
Transportation Information Area	X	X	X
Preferential carpool/vanpool parking		X	X
Parking designed to admit vanpools		X	X
Bicycle parking		X	X
Carpool/vanpool loading zones			X
Efficient pedestrian Access			X
Bus Stop Improvements			X
Safe Bike access from street to bike parking			X
Transit Review	For all Residential and nonresidential projects subject to EIR		

The proposed project is a multi-family residential project with 96 residential units. The project contains less than 25,000 square feet of new non-residential development. Therefore, this finding and the requirements of Chapter 21.64 of the LBMC are not applicable to the proposed project.

6. THE APPROVAL IS CONSISTENT WITH THE GREEN BUILDING STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT, AS LISTED IN SECTION 21.45.400.

The project will comply with green building standards for private development, as per the requirements of Section 21.45.400. The project design does not require additional green building project design features for development incentives. As conditioned and in conformance with Section 21.45.400, the project would meet the intent of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) at the Certified Level.

Additionally, bicycle parking is provided in excess of PD-30 and LBMC requirements, the rooftop would include solar panels in compliance with the Long

Beach Climate Action Plan (LB CAP), and the trash collection areas will feature a designated area for recyclable materials and separated organics, as conditioned. Therefore, the project would be in conformance with the Green Building Standards outlined for public and private development, as listed in Section 21.45.400 of the LBMC.

7. THE PROJECT IS IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE HOUSING REPLACEMENT REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 21.22.050 OF CHAPTER 21.11 (NO NET LOSS) OR SECTION 21.68.040.E OF THIS TITLE, AS APPLICABLE, AND WILL RESULT IN THE SAME OR GREATER NUMBER OF DWELLING UNITS; AND IN THE CASE OF EXISTING AFFORDABLE DWELLING UNITS, THAT THE DWELLING UNITS WILL BE REPLACED AT THE SAME OR DEEPER AFFORDABILITY LEVELS, AND THAT APPLICABLE TENANT PROTECTIONS OF THE LONG BEACH MUNICIPAL CODE WILL BE MET.

The existing site contains no housing units, so no units will be lost. The project involves the removal of a surface parking lot and ornamental landscaping. The proposed project is a multi-family residential building that will consist of a new eight-story building consisting of 96 residential dwelling units. Of those 96 residential dwelling units, twelve (12) of the units will be available for very-low-income households for a period of not less than 55 years.

The subject site is not on the site inventory in the City's 6th Cycle Housing Element, certified by the State of California's Department of Housing and Community Development in April 2022. The project is important to balance other sites across the City where projects were approved with fewer units or a different mix of units than found on the sites inventory; this project is critical to maintaining overall compliance with SB 330 and the Housing Element as well as more broadly meeting the City residents' housing needs.

Given that the development site is not on the City's Site Inventory, the project would result in 12 more very-low-income units and 84 more market rate units than projected outside of the site inventory. The proposed project includes both more affordable units and more market-rate units than was projected in the site inventory. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with the certified Housing Element and lead to a net increase of 96 housing units.