



2/25/2021

VIA EMAIL

Robby Thacker
City of Sacramento Community Development Department
300 Richards Blvd., 3rd Floor
Sacramento, CA 95811

RE: Albright Village (Z20-090)

Dear Mr. Thacker:

We were informed on Monday that a notice of public hearing for Albright Village had been distributed. It was frustrating to learn of the project's status so close in time to the Zoning Administrator and Design Director Hearing this week. Although the applicant likely notified you they had discussed the project with us that and we were aware of the reasons they could not implement several of our specific recommendations, the underlying design issues that were reasons for our recommendations remained. We had hoped the City would require greater conformance with the Central City Neighborhood Design Guidelines and the Citywide single-Unit and Duplex Residential Design Guidelines, thereby initiating a major revision.

The staff report discussed comments received from an adjacent property owner and a neighboring property owner, yet the 11/9/2020 letter from WALKSACRAMENTO not discussed. This letter discusses project revisions and details found in the staff report and the recommendations we made in our previous letter.

We are pleased to see in the staff report that one new medium-diameter tree in the U Street planter that was proposed in the original project routing will be replaced with two large-diameter trees and one small-diameter tree. This will provide some replacement canopy for the existing tree that will be removed, improve the future pedestrian experience, and provide environmental benefits to the residents and the City.

We note the addition of pedestrian gates at the entrance to each front yard sidewalk and at three locations on sidewalks within private access easements, one each on the access routes from U Street, 13th Street, and Uptown Alley. We believe the gates will denote the transition from semi-public space to private space, so further controlling access with locks should not be necessary.

Condition of Approval #63 requires final approval of fencing and gate details by planning staff, but there is no indication in the condition or on the project drawings whether the pedestrian gates will be locking or non-locking. COA #63 should state that the pedestrian gates will be non-locking.

COA #63 also limits the front- and street side-yard fencing height to 4' or less, while COA #114 requires fences to be a minimum height of 6' and COA #115 requires a minimum height of 5'. COAs #114 and #115 should be reworded to eliminate conflicts with 4' front-yard and street side-yard fences required by COA #63.

The following bulleted sections discuss the design guidelines and ordinances related to and as a partial basis for our original recommendations.

- The house on Lot 1 has no entry from the street and the porch and entry door doesn't have good visibility from U Street. The project doesn't support section 9. *Active Streetscapes and Sidewalk Cafes* in the *Central City Neighborhood Design Guidelines A.1.Placemaking, Urban Design Framework*

Principles and the principle and guidelines 1. *Frequent Entrances*, 3. *Main Entrance*, and 6. *Separation from Street* in *section A.6. Entries*.

Also, Design Principle and design guideline 1-2 in the *Citywide Single-Unit and Duplex Residential Design Guidelines, Site Design, 1 Setbacks and Orientation* are not supported by the project design.

We understand that reconfiguring the layout of the ground floor living space to place the entry door and front porch at the corner nearest the street is not acceptable to the applicant.

- The "eyes on U street" and the look of the houses on Lots 1 and 14 could be improved with several additional windows. The project doesn't support guideline 4.2 in the *Central City Neighborhood Design Guidelines A.1.Placemaking, Architectural Response, 4. Architectural Vocabulary*. Also, the Design Principle and design guidelines 1,1, 1-2 in *Citywide Single-Unit and Duplex Residential Design Guidelines, Site Design, 1 Setbacks and Orientation* and Design Principle and design guideline 9-9 in *9 Entry Features* are not supported by the project design.

We understand that adding windows is infeasible due to shear wall requirements. We preferred the original design with two windows, one each in the living area and dining area, to the three-window design as proposed in the final plans. The two-window design would have provided "eyes on the street" from two rooms, and there would be a better balance of solid wall surface to exterior window openings. We don't know if the two-window design met structural engineering requirements for the wall, but regardless, we question why the final plan doesn't mitigate the large blank space in some way.

- The driveway and buildings are not shaded by any trees.

We understand that 1) there is inadequate room between adjacent buildings and between the two rows of buildings to expand the planter, and 2) tree growth would be limited by the building heights. The private drive pavement will be a hot spot during the summer and fall, though. A potential mitigation might be to use permeable "cool paving."

- The final recommendation in our previous letter was to configure the two-car garages as two single-car garages, and that an incentive or option be offered to buyers that would provide zero or only one automobile parking space.

Unfortunately, we did not discuss this recommendation with the applicant. The minimum required off-street parking for the project site is zero spaces per unit, and the TOD ordinance reduces the requirement by 50% for being within ¼- to ½ -mile of a light rail station, as is Albright Village. Goals of the zero parking requirement and the TOD ordinance will not be supported as two-car garages for each unit may attract buyers and/or renters with a dependency on cars rather than attracting those that choose a car-reduced or car-free lifestyle.

The two-car garages also do not conform to the *Central City Neighborhood Design Guidelines A.8. Garages, Parking, Driveways, Service Access, 4. Doors* guideline to use two single garage doors when the door area is visible from the street.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. Please call or email me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Chris Holm
Project Manager