Oakland City Planning Commission STAFF REPORT

Design Review Committee

Case File Number: CMD04-086 **April 14, 2004**

Location:	**335 Hanover Avenue (See map on reverse)**
Assessors Parcel Numbers:	**022-0309-012-00**
Proposal:	To construct a new 12-unit residential building, and demolish an existing single-family dwelling (a C-rated PDHP)
Applicant:	Sylvia Leung (408)263-2188
Owner:	Kenneth Leung
Planning Permits Required:	Regular Design Review for a new 12-unit residential building
General Plan:	Urban Residential
Zoning:	R-70 High Density Residential Zone
Environmental Determination:	Exempt 15332; State CEQA Guidelines, Infill Lot
Historic Status:	Non-historic property; survey rating: C2+
Service Delivery District:	III – San Antonio
City Council District:	3
For further information:	Contact case planner **Maurice Brenyah-Addow** at **510-238-6342** or by email: mbrenyah@oaklandnet.com

SUMMARY

The proposed project is a 12-unit apartment development on a 7,250 square-foot lot in the Lake Merritt area of Oakland. The project complies with the R-70 High Density Residential zoning standards, which would permit up to 16 units for the site. The site is located in the "Urban Residential General Plan Land Use Classification. The applicant intends to apply for a Tentative Parcel Map at a later date in order to enable individual home ownership of the units as condominiums.

The proposed development consists of three upper floors with four residential units on each floor over a ground level concrete parking podium. The concrete podium is delineated by a pattern of horizontal and vertical accents created by smooth and rough textured concrete blocks of varying colors. The exterior materials of the upper floors include, stucco and wood siding finishes. The design applies a pattern of parapet roofs articulated by slight variations in the roofline and plane changes due to projecting wings of the building volumes for a varied roofline. The design also incorporates bay windows and decks to articulate the front façade. The 12 units in the building will consist of 3 one-bedroom, and 9 two-bedroom unit types. The average unit size (not including the garage) is approximately 1,000 square feet with an anticipated average household size of three individuals per unit, for a total estimated project population of approximately 36 people. The project provides one off street parking space per unit and three additional spaces for a total of 15 spaces as required by the S-12 regulations. The project provides approximately 1800 square feet of useable open space in the form of both private decks and group open spaces. In spite of the above, staff finds the front façade of the proposed building unresolved and in many ways reminiscent of the undesirable plain-looking 60s and 70s style apartments in the neighborhood instead of one that gives the neighborhood a face-lift.

Staff recommends that the Design Review Sub-committee comment on the street facing elevation and require revisions that would improve the appearance of the project.

#2

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION
The site is located on the east side of Lake Merritt between Lakeshore Avenue and Newton Avenue in the San Antonio District of Oakland. The site is a few blocks north of the Lake Merritt Bakery and Albertsons Supermarket located at the corner of East 18th Street and Lakeshore. Land uses immediately surrounding the project site include medium to large multi-family apartments and a few single-family dwellings. There is a mixture of civic uses such as churches, parks, and several commercial establishment in the vicinity.

KEY ISSUES
Staff believes that the proposal presents a sensible site plan, a desired and appropriate housing type, and a development project that will integrate well with the surrounding area. The proposal will replace an existing single family building that is currently classified as a Potential Designated History Property (PDHP) with a rating of C2+. The structure would be offered to the public for relocation prior to demolition. Some neighbors have expressed concerns about the demolitions of this the existing structure and various other potential negative impacts that could result from the proposed project ranging from views, solar, privacy, site geology, hydrology, and removal of existing trees, to the design aesthetics of the proposed building. Some attempts have been made to revise the design to address some of staff's comments but these changes were merely in the form of addition of metal shading louvers, an entry arbor and space defining planters. Some of the design issues that remain to be resolved are outlined below:

Main Pedestrian Entry
The current front entry is simply a recess on ground floor that consists of a pedestrian entry within the same plane as the garage door. The main entry is only separated from the garage by a stucco column. The entry is also located in close proximity to a trash room door that opens out to the same entry/driveway vestibule. Staff believes that this results in entryway that lacks the prominence and presence fit for a development of this caliber. The proximity of the garage door to the main pedestrian entrance is overwhelming while the proximity of the trash enclosure door could also expose people using the main entry to undesirable views of trash and smells of decaying organic waste.
Staff believes that the following can be done to enhance the main entry design:

- Define and enhance the pedestrian entry by offsetting it in different floor and wall planes from the garage door by pulling it closer to the street.
- Accentuate the main entryway with stronger and more substantial design elements such as a projecting porch with a covering such as a curved metal awning, street-facing gable and other architectural feature such as a pediment, hood, keystone, etc, that may be echoed elsewhere on the buildings such as the roof parapets or over the bays.

Front Façade
The current design articulates the building façades with projecting bay windows and balconies with vertical wood siding finishes and some glass railings. The elevator tower has a stucco finish with 12" square glass block openings that do not appear to be corresponded or reflected on any other part of the building. The windows appear plain with thin sashes with no grid pattern. The

roofline is essentially continuous with very little variation in height or form. This results in a static front elevation that appear quite unresolved.
Staff believes that the following can be done to enhance the design:

- Provide a more varied roofline by means of articulating the parapet roof and accentuate the bays with different roof forms;
- Recess windows and/or provide thicker window sashes, framing, and/or trims;
- Incorporate an interesting window pattern with proportions that relate to other elements on the front façade;
- Provide corner trims to frame the wood siding and the bays windows;
- Explore the possibility of incorporating decorative details such as dentils where stucco is used and brackets where wood siding etc.;

View, Privacy, and Solar Impacts
The site is located in high density residential zone characterized by large apartment buildings with zero side yard setbacks. In spite of that the adjoining buildings on both sides of the subject site are three story structures including the parking levels with side facing decks and patios. To mitigate potential view, privacy and solar impacts on these neighboring structures, the upper floors of the proposed building were setback approximately 15' from the side property lines to provide ample light-wells, and to allow adequate views of the sky not only for the adjacent buildings but also for the future residents of the proposed building. Staff believes that the generous relief provided in the form of group open space on both sides of the building adequately mitigate the potential view, solar and privacy impacts.
Staff believes that the following can be done to enhance privacy:

- Minimize privacy impacts by incorporating planters along edges of the group open spaces and the side property lines to provide additional buffering and screening between adjacent properties and the site.

In summary, provide more surface detailing, especially in regard to the balconies, bays, windows, entry, roofline, and landscape screening. Staff believes that the success of the overall design scheme will largely depend on the coherent application of these recommended details and elements to the proposed buildings.

Other neighbors' concerns
The other concerns with regard to geology, hydrology, property management, etc. are beyond the scope of the Design Review Sub-committee's review and would be addressed as part of the administrative and building permits review stages of the project.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends that the Commission review the proposed project for appropriate site and building design improvements prior to final consideration by staff.

Prepared by:

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Approved:

GARY PATTON
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Approved for forwarding to the
Design Review Committee of the City Planning Commission:

CLAUDIA CAPPIO
Development Director

ATTACHMENTS: Project plans