

Location:	4690 Tompkins Avenue (See map on reverse)
Assessors Parcel Number:	APN 037 -2544-017-01
Proposal:	Convert an existing non-conforming nursing home into 27 residential units (Note: the project has been modified from it's original submittal)
Applicant:	Wilson Ng
Owner:	Alice Loo
Planning Permits Required:	Major Conditional Use Permit for 27 units in the R-50 Zone.
General Plan:	Detached Unit Residential
Zoning:	R-50 Medium Density Residential Zone
Environmental Determination:	Exempt, Section 15332, State CEQ Guidelines, urban infill
Historic Status:	Potential Designated Historic Property (PDHP); survey rating: B+3
Service Delivery District:	IV – Lower Hills
City Council District:	6
Action to be Taken:	Decision on application based on staff report
For further information:	Contact case planner Robert D. Merkamp at 510-238-6283 or by email at Rmerkamp@oaklandnet.com .

SUMMARY

This project was first seen by the Planning Commission on May 21, 2003 as a 29-unit proposal. After much discussion, the Planning Commission decided to send it to the Design Review Committee for further input on the design. After the hearing, the applicant has further revised the project to attempt to address some of the concerns raised by the Commission and the community. The number of units has been reduced by two for a total of 27 and the number of parking spaces has increased by four to 38 (there is a small conflict as to the number of spaces proposed, see Key Issues and Impacts below). A landscape architect has been retained and a new landscaping plan has been submitted as a part of the application. The proposal adds a substantial amount of new landscaping to the project site. The rest of the project remains the same. No new exterior modifications or additions are proposed although some units are in need of new paint. The project does not modify the House of Psalms, an existing Senior Assisted Living Facility (labeled as Building Two) but is not proposed for modification or change in use.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The subject property is approximately 2.34 acres and is located near the I-580 and State Highway 13 interchange. The project site itself is bounded by Tompkin Avenue on the west, Wilkie Street on the south, and Fair Avenue on the east. The project site is located within the R-50 Medium Density Residential Zone and contains several existing structures including a former rest home (now mostly vacant), a senior assisted living complex, seven small cottages, and a smaller apartment building fronting on Fair Avenue. The project site is surrounded by residential uses, including mainly single family uses to the north and east, and a mixture of single and multi-family residences to the south and west.

KEY ISSUES AND IMPACTS:

Site Design: The project is served in part by a private access road that runs through the site from Tompkins to Fair Avenue. This access road was a subject of discussion as the Fire Prevention Bureau was concerned that they would not be able to utilize this roadway in the event of an emergency. After several conversations with representatives of that agency, the Fire Prevention Bureau recommended several modifications to the proposal that have been incorporated into the plan. A fire apparatus turnaround area is located toward the middle of the property, allowing an emergency vehicle to turnaround within the site. The road itself will be widened to 20 foot minimum width to provide adequate maneuvering width. Finally, much of the driveway will be striped as “no parking” to avoid any potential impediments to emergency vehicles trying to access the site.

Additional parking has been accommodated along this access road from the original proposal. The parking is now angled parking as opposed to parallel, allowing for more spaces in the interior of the project. This will improve circulation and bring more cars into the project site. Staff does recommend exploring additional parking (see the “Parking” section below) which could have impacts on the site plan.

Parking: The R-50 zone requires one parking space per residential unit, which comes to 27 spaces. The assisted living use requires a minimum of three spaces per employee during the shift with the maximum staffing. This use has 3 employees and is required to have 1 parking space (the ratio is set at 1 space per every 3 employees). At 37 parking spaces (the plans do show 38, however the House of Psalm nursing home on the property requires 1 space so that has been left out this discussion), the project exceeds the total requirements of 30 spaces for the site. All parking spaces are appropriately dimensioned and parking is conveniently located around the site. Most of the parking is accessed through either an existing private driveway that crosses the property or an entry driveway accessible from the corner of Tompkins Avenue and Wilkie Street. Other parking will be found in existing parking areas off of both Wilkie Street and Fair Avenue. One discrepancy with the parking is that, as submitted, the application referred to 40 parking spaces. A survey of the plans indicates only 38 accessible parking spaces. There are two internal parking spaces shown on the Landscape Plan (sheet C-2A in Attachment A) in the guest cottage near the center of the property that have been rendered inaccessible by new curbs and hedges. Staff recommends that the plan be revised to ensure all 40 spaces are accessible.

As an alternative, the site could be redesigned to accommodate even more parking especially along the internal driveway. The Design Review Committee could look at imposing a higher standard on the property than what the zoning code requires, as a part of the Major Conditional Use Permit. This would be similar to some other zones in the City, such as the S-12 zone which requires 1 parking space for every 3 habitable rooms as well as guest parking at a ratio of .2 spaces per unit. The majority of the apartments proposed are 3 to 4 bedrooms in size. Many of these units could be described as “dual master bedroom” units as many of them have bedrooms of equal size, each with their own bath. One could surmise from the floor plans that they would likely be rented out to separate individuals, thus increasing the parking load beyond what the mere number of units would suggest. If the Committee wishes to impose a parking standard based on the size of the unit, staff would recommend that the 3 and 4 bedroom units (as well as the owners unit that is 7 bedrooms in size) be required to have 2 spaces per unit rather than 1. This would require 43 parking spaces on the site (including the 1 space needed for the nursing home referenced above) and go farther to meet the potential parking demands of this unique floor plan arrangement.

Landscaping: The site is already heavily landscaped with a large variety of trees, shrubs, and landscaping. The applicant has retained a landscape architect who has proposed a redesigned site and landscape plan (please see sheet C-2A in Attachment A) that adds 14 trees to the site, including Japanese Maples and two species of Magnolia. The site already contains approximately 42 trees of various species and sizes. Each of the trees to be planted will be 24-inch box in size. The application also proposes a wide variety of shrubs, groundcover, annuals, and vines to be planted around the site, with particular emphasis being placed around the front entrance of the main building and along the Wilkie Street elevation. Landscaping is also placed to screen outdoor parking areas that would be otherwise visible from the street. All of the shrubs proposed are a minimum of 5-gallons in size.

All the proposed planting shall be maintained by an automatic irrigation system. All in all, the landscaping palette represents a great improvement over the landscaping currently in place. With the addition of automated sprinklers to the property, this should help ensure that the new plantings will continue to look attractive in the future. From the appearance of the current site, irrigation and maintenance by the applicant will be the key to the long term positive appearance of the site.

Fencing: The project is proposing a four foot high “estate-type” masonry wall with planting pockets on the Fair Avenue street frontage. No other details have been submitted regarding the design of the wall or what it may look like. Staff recommends the applicant submit new drawings prior to any Planning Commission hearing showing a wall detail. The detail will include elevations, materials, and colors. Staff recommends that any wall design mirror the main building (the most architecturally interesting structure) in terms of color and style, to try and create a uniform, community feel. Finally, a 4’ wall is too tall per city zoning code. A maximum height of 3’6” is allowed.

Floor Plans: The proposal would create new internal divisions within the main building to create 17 residential units in what is now an approximately 70 room facility. This will involve erecting new separation walls to create these units as well as removing some interior walls between the old rooms to create more open apartments. The applicants have met with representatives from the Building Division to ensure that these new divisions inside the structure will be up to current building codes. As these are large plans, clarity can be an issue. Therefore, staff recommends the applicant revise their plans prior to the Planning Commission hearing, showing how the floor plans look now and compare that with what they’re proposing. The proposed plans should be edited to remove things like showing where the walls that will be removed currently are. All of this makes the current plan set very difficult to read and clarifying the proposed floor plan for all the units will simplify the analysis of the project.

Signage: No information regarding any potential signage has been submitted. Any signage will require a design review permit from the Zoning Division prior to construction or installation. Staff recommends that any sign be designed to blend in with the existing architecture as expressed in the main building.

Design: The property owner is proposing no exterior alterations or modifications to the buildings on the project. Staff does not recommend substantial external changes as the buildings are in generally good condition. An analysis of the site shows that some buildings may need some minor external renovation, including possibly new paint or siding on some of the units. Many of the smaller cottages need some repair work to the siding and a new coat of paint. Staff recommends that at this time the applicant do repairs, repainting, and any maintenance on the cottages to improve their appearance.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- That the site/landscape plan be revised to ensure all 40 spaces are accessible.
- If the committee wishes to tie the amount of parking to the unit sizes, staff would recommend that the 3 and 4 bedroom units (as well as the owners unit that is 7 bedrooms in size) be required to have 2 spaces per unit rather than 1 for a total of 43 spaces on site.
- That the cottages be repainted and repaired as needed to better blend in with the rest of the site.
- That the applicant submit a wall or screening detail for the Fair Avenue elevation showing the materials used, colors, and height (limited by code to 3’6”).
- That the applicant shall revise the proposed floor plans, removing such items as “walls to be removed” and other such things that confuse the plan set.

Prepared by:

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Planner II

Approved by:

GARY V. PATTON
Deputy Director of Planning and Zoning

Approved for forwarding to the
City Planning Commission:

LESLIE GOULD
Director of Planning and Zoning

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Plans
- B. Site Photographs (color photos available at hearing)
- C. Original Planning Commission Staff Report

CM00-249/RDM