

Case File Number: ZP040050

June 23, 2004

Location:	Block T-10 in City Center bounded by 14th Street, the 13th Street pedestrian walkway, Jefferson Street, and Martin Luther King Jr. Way.
Proposal:	Construction of a mixed-use project with approximately 246 for-sale residential units, 3,000 square feet of ground-floor commercial space, and 246 structured parking spaces.
Applicant:	Olson Urban Housing, LLC
Owner:	City of Oakland Redevelopment Agency
Planning Permits Required:	Amendment to Preliminary Development Plan for City Center Project, Final Development Plan for Block T-10, Design Review, a Variance for Construction of New Live-Work Units and for Reduced Setbacks, and a Subdivision Map.
General Plan:	Central Business District
Zoning:	C-51 Central Business Service Commercial Zone/S-17 Downtown Residential Open Space Combining Zone
Environmental Determination:	Environmental review underway. It is anticipated that an Addendum to the EIR certified in 2000 for the City Center project will be sufficient to provide the required environmental review for the project.
Historic Status:	N/A
Service Delivery District:	Downtown/West Oakland/Harbor
City Council District:	3
For further information:	Contact case planner Lynn Warner at 510-238-6168 or by e-mail at lwarner@oaklandnet.com

SUMMARY

The purpose of this item is to receive preliminary design review comments on the proposed project to be located on Block T-10 of the four-block City Center project site. Block T-10 is bounded by 14th Street, the 13th Street pedestrian walkway, Jefferson Street, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. The site, called Block T-10, is one of the four blocks included in the City Center Project Planned Unit Development (PUD), which was approved in April, 2000. Block T-9 has been developed as a 470,000 square foot office building and Blocks T-5/6 and T-12 have approvals from the original Preliminary Development Plan for two additional office buildings. Block T-10 was originally approved for a mixed-use office and residential building, but is now planned as residential with some ground-floor retail space.

Staff is seeking comments from the Design Review Committee and the public regarding the design of the proposed project that may provide direction to the applicant and staff in processing the planning applications for the project, prior to the project coming to the full Commission. It is anticipated that the project will come before the Planning Commission for a decision by the end of this summer. The primary design issues identified by staff include the variety of elements on the 14th Street elevation, ground floor design and details, the inconsistency of the building stepback along the 13th Street pedestrian walkway, the treatment of the exterior corridors, and the proposed paving at 14th and Jefferson Streets.

PROJECT SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

The approximately 1.5-acre site, identified as Block T-10, is the block bounded by 14th Street, the 13th Street pedestrian walkway, Jefferson Street, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. The project site is currently fenced and used for temporary construction worker parking and storage. The site does not contain any structures. The City Center West parking garage is located immediately south of the 13th Street pedestrian walkway, and a mix of residential and commercial uses is located across 14th Street to the north. Preservation Park and the African-American Museum and Library are located west of the site across Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, and the Ronald V. Dellums Federal Building is located west of the site across Jefferson Street.

BACKGROUND

Block T-10 is the second block proposed for development out of the phased four-block City Center Project approved in April, 2000. The Shorenstein Company has constructed an office building on Block T-9 and has approvals as part of their Preliminary Development Plan (PDP) to construct two more office buildings on Blocks T-5/6 and T-12. The approved PDP also included a mixed-use project on Block T-10 that entailed 550,000 square feet of office space, 200 residential units, 8,000 square feet of ground-floor commercial space, and 230 parking spaces. Shorenstein gave up its development rights for Block T-10 and another developer, Camden, proposed a residential project on the site which was considered by the Design Review Committee in October, 2003. Camden withdrew its project application shortly thereafter and the Redevelopment Agency selected another residential developer, Olson Urban Housing.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Olson is currently proposing the construction of approximately 246 for-sale residential units, 3,000 square feet of ground-floor commercial space, and 246 structured parking spaces. Additional parking spaces will be available in the adjacent City Center West Garage. The buildings are five stories tall with two mezzanine levels, over at-grade and below-grade parking levels. The proposed units range in size from 580 to 1,500 square feet and are a combination of one- and two-bedroom units. Live-work loft units on the ground floor level will have entrances from the street. The ground-floor commercial space will be provided at the corner of 14th and Jefferson Streets. The primary residential access is at the corner of Jefferson Street and the 13th Street pedestrian walkway. The garage access and a loading berth will be provided on Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. Open space will be provided via a combination of private balconies and terraces, as well as two common courtyards at the podium level. The courtyards will be visible from 14th Street and the 13th Street pedestrian walkway, but will be located above street level.

GENERAL PLAN ANALYSIS

The General Plan designation for the project site is Central Business District, which is intended as a high-density mixed-use urban center. The maximum floor area ratio (FAR) allowed by this designation is 20.0, and the proposed FAR is approximately 3.8. Thus the proposed project, which includes approximately 245,000 square feet of residential space and 3,000 square feet of ground-floor commercial space, falls well within the maximum allowable FAR. The General Plan states that the desired character and uses in the district include a mix of large-scale offices, commercial, urban (high-rise) residential, institutional, open space, cultural, educational, arts,

entertainment, service, community facilities, and visitor uses. The proposed uses are consistent with the General Plan.

ZONING ANALYSIS

The zoning of the site is C-51/Central Business Service Commercial. This zoning district allows the proposed residential and commercial uses. The maximum FAR allowed under this zoning classification is 7.0, and may be exceeded by ten percent on any corner lot. Therefore, the maximum FAR allowed for this site by the Zoning Regulations is 7.7, and the proposed project is within the allowable FAR.

It is anticipated that the proposed project will require the following planning approvals: an amendment to the existing PDP for the City Center Project, a Final Development Plan (FDP) for Block T-10, Design Review, a Variance for construction of new live-work units and for reduced court setbacks, and a Subdivision Map. All applicable criteria for these entitlements will be analyzed and appropriate findings will be made in conjunction with review by the full Planning Commission.

DESIGN ISSUES

The area surrounding the site includes a variety of office, retail, and residential uses, as well as a variety of building types. Building heights in the area generally range from two stories in Preservation Park to 17 stories at the Federal Building. The proposed building would provide a transition in height between the nearby high-rise Federal, State, and City Center office buildings, which generally range in height from 17-22 stories, and the two-story Victorian structures in Preservation Park. The height of the mixed-use office and residential building previously considered for this site as part of the original City Center project approval would have been 31 stories. The seven-story height (five stories with two mezzanine levels) of the current proposal would provide a better transition in height than the previously approved proposal for Block T-10.

The modern design articulates the mass of the building through the use of projecting bay windows and balconies, stepbacks on portions of the top level, a variety of angled elements including roof lines, and a combination of different materials and colors. The fenestration includes a combination of bay windows, punched window openings, and glass curtain walls. The proposed building materials include stucco and metal panels on the body of the building; stone at the base; metal awnings, railings, and soffits; and aluminum windows.

Staff believes that the conceptual design is generally attractive and innovative. However, staff has identified a number of outstanding design issues that are presented in the following section of this report. It is requested that the DRC comment on these issues as well as any other layout or design elements. Staff will then continue to work with the applicant to refine and further develop the design in anticipation of full Planning Commission review later this summer.

Outstanding Design Issues

- The variety of elements on the 14th Street elevation appears busy. At the corner of 14th and Jefferson Streets there is a juxtaposition of various angled elements on the building and in the roofline. The building is angled toward the street, the ground-floor commercial space is angled to a point facing the street, and the adjacent rooflines have two different upward angles. *Staff finding:* Staff believes that simplifying this elevation somewhat would result in a more cohesive design.
- Ground floor design and details are a critical part of how the building will read from the pedestrian level. Durable, high-quality stone tiles are proposed at the base in order to add visual interest. In addition, the treatment of the ground-floor units is important in order to provide a visual connection between the units and the street, while still distinguishing between public and private space. *Staff finding:* Submittal of detailed elevations of the ground floor level is required.
- A consistent stepback along the 13th Street pedestrian walkway should be provided on the top level of the building. Although the ends of the 70-foot tall building step back from the walkway approximately 12 feet at the top level, the central portion of the building does not provide a stepback. Incorporating a stepback into the central portion of the building would reduce the apparent height of the wall along the length of the building adjacent to the pedestrian walkway, in order to be more compatible with the much more pronounced stepback of the adjacent City Center West Garage. This walkway was carefully designed as part of the City Center West Garage to provide a visual and pedestrian linkage between the Federal Building and Preservation Park, and incorporated a stepped seating area with sculptures to provide pedestrian amenities along the walkway. The upper stories of the garage structure were deliberately held back to create a more open corridor. The semi-circular design and art pieces create an inviting urban space. *Staff finding:* While staff acknowledges that the proposed residential project incorporates a different set of building design elements, a stronger gesture is required to this important pedestrian and visual link.
- The treatment of the exterior corridors is important. Exterior open corridors are proposed to connect the various portions of the building, and would be visible from every street frontage except 14th Street. *Staff finding:* Details for the treatment of these proposed corridors have not yet been provided. Staff recommends that the final design minimizes their visibility and/or enhances their treatment.
- More detailed plans need to be provided for the proposed sidewalk paving, as the materials have not yet been identified. Although a consistent sidewalk paving treatment is proposed along the frontage of Martin Luther King, Jr. Way and most of 14th Street, an irregular, angled pattern of special paving is proposed at the corner of 14th Street and along most of the Jefferson Street frontage. *Staff finding:* The change in sidewalk pattern and materials from one part of the project frontage to another is rather unusual, and it remains to be determined if such a proposal would be acceptable to the Public Works Agency.

CONCLUSION

Staff recommends the Design Review Committee review and comment on the preliminary plans for the proposed project, with emphasis on the issues discussed above, as well as any other issues the Committee may have.

Respectfully submitted:

CLAUDIA CAPPIO
Development Director

Prepared by:

LYNN WARNER
Planner IV, Major Development Projects

Attachments: A. Project Plans