

Location:	Block T-10 in City Center bounded by 14th Street on the north, 13th Street pedestrian walk on the south, Jefferson Street on the east, and Martin Luther King Jr. Way on the west.
Proposal:	Construction of a mixed-use building with approximately 220 rental residential units, 2,914 square feet of ground-floor retail space, and 242 parking spaces.
Applicant:	Camden USA, Inc.
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, Major Conditional Use Permit for construction of over 100,000 square feet of floor area, Variance for deficit of one loading berth, Design Review, and 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:	Addendum to City Center Project Environmental Impact Report prepared.
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 report is to provide preliminary design review comments for 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 walk, 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 interested in 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 year. The primary design issues identified by staff include the type, combination, and quality of exterior colors and materials; fenestration, window design and window quality; ground floor design and details; variety in rooflines; stepping back a portion of the building along the 13th Street pedestrian walkway; and the treatment of the garage wall facing Martin Luther King, Jr. Way.

PROJECT SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

The approximately 1.5 acre site is 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. Adjacent to the site on the south is the City Center West parking garage, and on the north is a mix of residential and commercial uses. West of the site is Preservation Park and the African-American Museum and Library. East of the site is the Ronald V. Dellums Federal Building.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Block T-10 is the second block proposed for development out of the original four-block City Center Project approved in April, 2000. Shorenstein has constructed an office building on Block T-9 and has approvals as part of the original 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 a new developer, Camden, is proposing an amendment to the PDP for Block T-10 that entails the construction of approximately 220 rental residential units, 2,914 square feet of ground-floor commercial space, and 242 parking spaces.

The project varies in height from six stories to eight stories. The proposed units range in size from 520 to 1,454 square feet and are a combination of studios, one- and two-bedroom units. About 2,000 square feet of clubhouse and leasing space will be provided on the ground floor at the corner of 14th and Jefferson Streets, and 2,914 square feet of retail space will be provided at the corner of Jefferson Street and the 13th Street pedestrian walkway. The primary residential access is on Jefferson Street and is two stories tall. A vehicle drop-off area will be provided on Jefferson Street, and a loading berth will be provided on 14th Street. Approximately 242 parking spaces will be provided in a separate six-story garage with access from Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. Open space will be provided via a combination of private balconies and terraces, as well as a common courtyard in the center of the ground 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 residential density allowed by this designation is 500 dwelling units per net acre. The 1.5 acre (66,000 sq. ft.) site could support a maximum of 755 units. Thus the proposed project of 220 units falls within the allowable density and is consistent with the General Plan. 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.

ZONING ANALYSIS

The zoning of the site is C-51 Central Business Service Commercial. This zoning district allows residential uses. The residential density allowed under this zoning classification is 1 unit per 150 square feet of lot area, and may be exceeded by ten percent on any corner lot. Therefore, the maximum residential density allowed for this site by the Zoning Regulations is 484 units, and the proposed project is within the allowable density and is generally consistent with the Zoning Regulations.

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, a Major Conditional Use Permit for construction of over 100,000 square feet of floor area, Design Review, a Variance for a deficit of one loading berth, 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 project is a medium-high density residential project that is striving to create an urban-scaled, residential project in an area that includes a variety of office, retail, and residential uses. Building heights in the area generally range from two stories in Preservation Park to 17 stories at the Federal Building. This 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 six- to eight-story height of the current proposal would provide a better transition in height than the previously approved proposal for Block T-10.

Although the proposed building has a simple form and relatively large mass, there is a good modulation of the facade to create interest through the use of vertical and horizontal features. The proposed modern architectural style is compatible with the mix of styles in the surrounding area. The site layout provides a good relationship to the adjacent streets, with the primary pedestrian access on Jefferson Street and stoops for the ground-floor units facing the 13th Street pedestrian walkway.

The building is U-shaped with a raised courtyard in the center and a separate parking garage fronting on Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. The building design includes a combination of punched window openings and glass curtain walls. Recessed balconies are provided for the above-ground levels, as well as stoops for the ground-floor units facing the 13th Street pedestrian walkway.

Refinements made to the design include the addition of stoops on the 13th Street pedestrian walkway, eliminating balconies at the ground floor level on 14th Street for security, modifying the garage design to minimize the mass by breaking it up visually into three components, and providing a vehicle drop-off area on Jefferson Street.

A range of building materials currently being considered including stucco or composite panels on the body of the building, reconstituted stone panels or exposed cast-in-place concrete at the base, metal grillwork on the parking garage, and aluminum windows. The design team will explore the possibilities of using these materials and will then decide which to propose for the building.

Based on the conceptual plans submitted for the project, 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 in December 2003.

Outstanding Design Issues

- Colors and materials are an integral component to reducing the apparent mass of the building, particularly on the long facades along 14th Street and the 13th Street pedestrian walkway. This aspect is also important as a means to modulate the fairly simple, angular building forms and help to create interest. A formal color and materials palette for the project has not yet been submitted. Staff believes that different color schemes should be utilized for the two ends of each of these elevations in order to make them appear less continuous.
- Fenestration, window design and window quality are a critical part of the success of this building. More detail on the window types, amount of recess, and quality needs to be provided.
- Ground floor design and details are a critical part of how the building will read from the pedestrian level. Durable, high-quality materials should be provided at the base in order to add visual interest. The reconstituted stone or cast-in-place concrete currently being considered for the base seem to be appropriate materials. In addition, the treatment of the stoops for the ground-floor units is important in order to provide a visual connection between the units and the pedestrian walkway and to minimize the height of the walls at the pedestrian level. As designed, these stairway walls appear monolithic and create too much of a visual barrier. The design of these walls needs to be opened up as well as landscaped.
- Variety in rooflines is another way to break up the massing of the building. The transition in height from six to eight stories on the Jefferson Street and Martin Luther King, Jr. Way elevations successfully breaks up the massing on these facades. Staff recommends that the 14th Street and 13th Street pedestrian walkway elevations be revised to include some variety in roof height, perhaps at the corners of the building or at the building access points in the

center of each frontage, particularly since these are the longest facades. Another design option would be to raise the ceiling height of the top floor in order to provide taller windows, thereby creating more variation in the top of the building. This approach would also serve to strengthen the top portion of the building.

- A building setback along the 13th Street pedestrian walkway should be provided above the second floor level. This would be compatible with the setback of the adjacent City Center West Garage, thus completing the unfinished axis between the Federal Building and Preservation Park. This walkway was carefully designed as part of the City Center West Garage to provide a visual and pedestrian linkage, 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. 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 garage wall along Martin Luther King Jr. Way is important. The street façade of the six- level garage will be treated with a combination of metal grillwork and landscaping. Portions of the garage wall are stepped back to reduce the apparent mass of this façade. Details of the proposed landscaping have not yet been provided. Staff recommends that the final design include screening the vehicles and any blank garage walls from public view through some combination of landscaping and artwork to create depth and interest.

CONCLUSION

Staff recommends the Design Review Committee review and comment on the site layout and conceptual design of 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