DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE
AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA DATE:	DECEMBER 5, 2012
TO:	Chair Woollett and Members of the Design Review Committee
THRU:	Leslie Aranda Roseberry, Planning Manager
FROM:	Anna Pehoushek, Principal Planner
SUBJECT:	MAJOR SITE PLAN REVIEW (MJSP NO. 0704-12), ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW NO. 1831-12, AND DESIGN REVIEW (DRC No. 4652-12) FOR A NEW 334 MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AND ASSOCIATED PARKING STRUCTURE.

SUMMARY

The applicant is proposing to redevelop an existing surface parking lot with a new 334-unit apartment development, leasing office, clubhouse (with fitness center, club room lounge, business center), two courtyards (with swimming pool, and outdoor lounge areas), and two abutting 7-level parking structures; one will serve the residential development (678 spaces), while the other will provide replacement parking for the Doubletree Hotel (494 spaces) that is presently provided in the surface parking lot. The residential units will be oriented to area streets and arranged around the two courtyards.

RECOMMENDATION - PRELIMINARY REVIEW

The project went before the Staff Review Committee on September 19, 2012 for preliminary comments. The applicant is currently finalizing the environmental document for submission and has requested a preliminary review of the proposed concept with the City's Design Review Committee. No findings are stated. This is only a preliminary review.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Applicant:	Nate Carlson, AMLI Residential
Owner:	AMLI Residential
Property Location:	3537 The City Way (south of Doubletree Hotel)
General Plan Designation:	Urban Mixed Use (UMIX) (30-60 dwelling units/acre; 1.5-3.0 FAR)
Zoning Classification:	Urban Mixed Use (UMU)
Existing Development:	Surface parking lot (494 spaces) for the Doubletree Hotel.
Property Size:	5.57-acre site

Associated Applications: MJSP No. 0704-12, ENV No. 1831-12, and DRC No. 4652-12

Previous DRC Review: None

PUBLIC NOTICE

No Public Notice was required for the Design Review phase of this project. The project will ultimately go before the Planning Commission, and public hearing notification will be posted and mailed at that time prior to decision making action.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Mitigated Negative Declaration (ENV No. 1831-12) is being prepared to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the project in accordance with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per State CEQA Guidelines Section 15070 and in conformance with Local CEQA Guidelines.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project consists of a four-story, 334-unit apartment complex (60 dwelling units/acre; 1.5 FAR) leasing office, clubhouse (with fitness center, club room lounge, business center), and two landscaped courtyards (with swimming pool, and outdoor lounge areas). The residential units will be oriented to area streets and arranged around the two courtyards.

Parking for the development would be provided in two abutting 7-level (56'8") parking structures (1,172 spaces combined); one structure provides parking for the residential units, while the other provides replacement parking for the Doubletree Hotel that will be lost as a result of project construction. One level of the parking structure will be subterranean. The parking structure will be wrapped on two sides by the residential units.

As part of the project, the applicant is proposing streetscape enhancements that include landscaped parkways, the planting of canopy trees along the sidewalks that surround the site, and rehabilitation of the roadway medians along The City Drive and Manchester Avenue. The intention of the streetscape program is to respond to existing and anticipated future patterns of pedestrian activity in the area.

EXISTING SITE AND AREA CONTEXT

The 5.57-acre site is presently developed with surface parking spaces, and is surrounded by the Doubletree Hotel to the north, UC Irvine Medical Center to the east, a high-rise office building to the west, and an Outlets at Orange surface parking lot to the south. The site presently provides 494 parking spaces for the Doubletree Hotel. The site has street frontage on three sides: The City Drive on the east, Manchester Avenue on the west, and The City Way on the south.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Orange Municipal Code (OMC) Section 17.10.070 establishes the general criteria the Design Review Committee should use when reviewing the project. This section states the following:

The project shall have an internally consistent, integrated design theme, which is reflected in the following elements:

1. **Architectural Features**.
   a. The architectural features shall reflect a similar design style or period.
   b. Creative building elements and identifying features should be used to create a high quality project with visual interest and an architectural style.
2. **Landscape**.
   a. The type, size and location of landscape materials shall support the project's overall design concept.
   b. Landscaping shall not obstruct visibility of required addressing, nor shall it obstruct the vision of motorists or pedestrians in proximity to the site.
   c. Landscape areas shall be provided in and around parking lots to break up the appearance of large expanses of hardscape.
3. **Signage**. All signage shall be compatible with the building(s) design, scale, colors, materials and lighting.
4. **Secondary Functional and Accessory Features**. Trash receptacles, storage and loading areas, transformers and mechanical equipment shall be screened in a manner, which is architecturally compatible with the principal building(s).

ANALYSIS/STATEMENT OF THE ISSUES

Issue 1: Building Architecture:

The proposed project features a 4-story (50' high) contemporary building design that is intended to convey an urban housing aesthetic. Based on the City's mixed use land use program for this area of the City, the applicant has developed a design that considers the pedestrian activity that presently exists in the area, and is expected to increase over time as incremental infill development occurs in the area. The design breaks up the building elevations with articulated wall planes, and integrates pedestrian-scale elements such as stoops leading to unit entrances, exterior patios and balconies.

Exterior building materials consist of a combination of plaster, fiber cement siding, metal, and glass. These material choices and placement on the elevations are intended to provide visual interest for the building when viewed both from a distance and the adjacent sidewalk. Project colors are anticipated to be blues and grays, whites, and brown accented with teal and black.

Issue 2: Parking Structure Design:

The 7-level parking structure is a significant visual feature of the proposed project, with a height of 58'. The parking structure is located at the northern portion of the site, interfacing with the Doubletree Hotel, and being highly visible from the intersection of Chapman Avenue and The City Drive. The parking structure is otherwise blocked from site by the residential units from The City Way and Manchester Avenue.

Given the visual prominence of the parking structure, the applicant is proposing an aesthetic treatment that both screens the parking structure and functions as a "branding" scheme for Uptown Orange. The applicant is proposing a system of multi-colored painted aluminum louvers spanning the height of the parking structure. The louvers are approximately 47'6" tall and 12" deep, and will be spaced 16" on center apart. They are expected to be painted in shades of orange, blue, and white.

The louvers will be double sided so as to be visible from different angles. They will incorporate lettering that change in appearance with movement along The City Drive, as well as along the vehicular access way that separates the Doubletree Hotel from the parking structure. The lettering will read: "Uptown Orange" all in one view; "Uptown" and "Orange" in separate views; and "Hotel Parking ↓" for the eastbound view from the vehicular access between the hotel and parking structure to direct motorists to the parking structure access point.

Staff is presently exploring the manner in which the parking structure graphics relate to the sign provisions of the Zoning Ordinance.

Issue 3: Streetscape Treatment:

The applicant proposes sidewalk landscaping that softens the interface between the proposed apartments and surrounding streets, and establishes and urban streetscape aesthetic for the area that incorporates components commonly found in urban mixed use districts. The landscape program includes street tree and parkway planting that goes beyond simply planting City street trees. The design is intended to provide an appealing pedestrian experience by through the planting of alternating canopy trees and palm trees along The City Drive, palm trees along The City Way in response to the palm trees that presently exist on the south side of The City Way, and canopy trees along Manchester Avenue. The passageway between the proposed project and the Doubletree Hotel would also receive concentrated street tree planting given the volume of pedestrian activity that this corridor experiences today, and can be expected in the future.

Due to the scale of The City Drive and volume of traffic that street carries, the applicant is also proposing to install a landscaped parkway to provide a separation between vehicle lanes and the sidewalk to provide a more comfortable and useable pedestrian space. This landscaped parkway treatment continues around all three street frontages of the proposed development.

Because the proposed street tree and parkway planting include elements that go beyond the City's standard sidewalk and tree planting specifications, the applicant would enter into a maintenance agreement with the City to assume responsibility for its care and condition.

In addition to addressing the sidewalk areas surrounding the site, the applicant is also proposing improvements to the medians on Manchester Avenue that include reconfiguration for traffic safety and landscaping. Proposed landscaping consists of a combination of ornamental grasses and large-scale canopy trees.

Issue 4: On-Site Landscaping:

The proposed landscaping exceeds the City's landscape requirements for the site. On-site landscaping ranges from an entry statement at Manchester Avenue entry to the project around the clubhouse/leasing office featuring multi-colored free-standing vertical fins, large canopy trees, low shrubs, and ground cover. Similar and complementary plant material continues around the street side setback areas, and at entry stoops.

The residential units are largely arranged around two courtyards; one being the location of a swimming pool, cabanas, and bocce ball/billiards green, with the other being a passive landscaped area with a yoga dome, pathways and seating areas. The plant palette for the swimming pool courtyard includes of a combination of canopy and palm trees. The passive courtyard similarly features canopy trees and palms.

Issue 5: Signage

Signage for the proposed development consists of free standing monument signs, building mounted blade signs, and building mounted lettering. The text incorporated into the parking structure louvers also constitutes signage.

The sign provisions for residential development in the Zoning Ordinance do not accommodate the variety of sign types proposed by the applicant. Staff is presently exploring options for the appropriate treatment of signage for large-scale infill residential development not only on the project site, but in the context of the City's Urban Mixed Use districts. Consequently, the proposed project signage will ultimately be brought to the DRC for approval separately from the architectural and landscape design. Staff is seeking feedback from the DRC on the overall proposed signage, with particular focus on scale and proportion in relation to the site and building design.

ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATION

The project went before the Staff Review Committee on September 19th for preliminary comments.

CONDITIONS

Staff is recommending that the Design Review Committee provide comments and design direction only on the proposed project. No findings are stated. This is only a preliminary review.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity Map
2. Site Photos
3. Project Plans dated August 30, 2012
4. Conceptual Landscape Plan stamp dated November 16, 2012
5. Streetscape Cross Sections stamp dated November 16, 2012
6. Project Booklet dated September 2012

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