

# TRACHTENBERG ARCHITECTS

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**540 San Pablo Avenue, Albany**

10/11/2021

## **Applicant Statement**

### **Summary**

Following meetings at the Planning Commission on March 25<sup>th</sup>, August 4<sup>th</sup>, and September 29<sup>th</sup>, our team made the following adjustments in response to comments from the Commission:

#### **Responses to the March 25<sup>th</sup> Study Session**

1. Request for more open space and less surface parking. 7,173 square feet of open space has been added to the project, including several ground-level public spaces that replace surface parking.
2. Request for more ground level open spaces accessible to the wider community. Two plazas and a park open to the wider community have been added to the ground level site plan.
3. Request for a café adjacent to outdoor seating. Building B has been redesigned to provide a café rather than a lobby adjacent to one of the outdoor seating plazas.
4. Request for a connection to Adams for pedestrians and bikes. The site plan has been redesigned to provide three pedestrian and bike connections to between San Pablo and Adams.
5. Request for a built edge along Adams instead of surface parking. Adams street is now fronted by a row of 9 family townhouse units and a publicly accessible park instead of surface parking.
6. Request for more family units if possible. The project has been redesigned to be 49.3% two and three-bedroom family units (a total of 102 family units, including 9 townhouses).

#### **Responses to the August 4<sup>th</sup> Commission Hearing**

1. Request to study adding more articulation to the ground level of Building A along Adams and Clay. Translucent windows have been added to add articulation and to provide natural daylighting for the garage.
2. Request to study the townhouses and townhouse porches to potential add more variety and/or design detail. The townhouses have been refined in three ways. The color has been revised to punctuate each townhouse and to provide more richness and variation in the colors. The previous open picket balcony railings have been replaced with decorative screen railings to provide more detail and slightly more privacy to the decks. And finally, a balcony has been added to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor master bedroom for every 3<sup>rd</sup> unit to provide additional subtle variation to the facades.
3. Request to study the access to the bike parking in Building A and to add more cargo bike spaces if possible. The layout of Building A has been adjusted to provide additional secure access to the bike room, which can now be accessed both through the lobby and through the garage via a door at the central court. The bike room has also been enlarged to accommodate additional bikes and cargo bikes.
4. Request to study adjusting the park to be designed for kids and families. The publicly-accessible on-site park along Adams has been redesigned with more play features, including more open play space, mounded landscaping, playful stones, a stepped seating feature, and areas for parents to sit and watch their children play.

5. Request to study expanding the active spaces and/or adjusting the more solid façade elements along San Pablo. The size of the retail spaces, active lobbies and amenities and glazing have all been expanded so that the façade is now approximately 85% glazing. To further enliven the San Pablo streetscape, window box features to display photographs and memorabilia have been added.

### **Responses to the September 29<sup>th</sup> Commission Hearing**

1. Eliminate 6 exterior parking spaces and expand the park. The six exterior parking spaces facing Adams have been eliminated, and the family-friendly park on Adams has been expanded from 1,848 SF to 3,068 SF. In total, in response to Planning Commission comments since the initial Study Session plans, the surface parking has been reduced by 75% (75 down to 20), the open space has been increased by 60% (13,997 sf to 22,390 sf), and the project now includes 12,243 square feet of ground level open space that is accessible to the wider community.
2. Require better bike room access for cargo bikes. The layout of the bike rooms and garages in both Building A and B have been revised to provide improved access for cargo bikes.
3. Encourage developer to look at moving MEP rooms off San Pablo. The project plans have been further revised to replace one of the MEP rooms with an active-use pet spa for Building B and to increase the overall amount of retail and active lobby spaces. The remaining bike rooms and single MEP room are part of the density bonus application, are necessary to the function of the buildings, and as noted above are used as an opportunity to add feature display box windows to enliven the streetscape.
4. Encourage art on site – The project team will continue to explore opportunities for on-site art as a potential alternative to the in-lieu fee option during the building permit process.
5. Salvage bowling alley signage – The project team will continue to explore opportunities to salvage the bowling alley signage and/or to allow the City of Albany to do so during the building permit process.

### **Voluntary Sidewalk Widening**

The project proposes to offer public improvements on all three frontages:

- At Clay Street, the project is proposing to voluntarily hold the building 8' back from the property line, widening the sidewalk from the current, very-narrow width of 5-feet to a generous width of 13-feet. This will allow for street trees, a 6-foot pedestrian zone, and for sidewalk landscaping along the building.
- At San Pablo, the project is proposing to set the building back between 2-feet to 5-feet from the property line, widening the sidewalk and providing additional room for sidewalk seating and landscaping.
- At Adams Street, the project is proposing to offer part of the site area frontage for a park and a dog walking area for use of the wider community.

### **Publicly Accessible Site Amenities**

The project is proposing to provide a total of 12,243 square feet of areas accessible to the wider community:

- A 3,068 square foot family-friendly park on Adams
- A 600 square foot cafe plaza along San Pablo Avenue
- A 600 square foot fountain plaza
- 1,645 square foot of dog walking area along Adams
- 4,000 square feet for three pedestrian connections between San Pablo and Adams
- 1,600 square feet total along the full length of Clay, used to widen the sidewalk by an additional 8 feet.
- 730 square feet along the full length of San Pablo Avenue to widen the sidewalk by 2 to 5 feet and to provide for outdoor seating for commercial uses.

### **Family Units**

The project is proposing a total of 102 family units, 49.3% of the total project:

- Two-bedroom units: 80, 38.6% of the project
- Three-bedroom units and three-bedroom townhouses: 22 units, 10.6% of the project.

### **Parking**

As a State Density Bonus Project located within a ½ mile of a major transit stop, the parking requirements are regulated by the Density Bonus ratios.

#### **PARKING**

	DENSITY BONUS REQUIREMENT			PROVIDED				
	UNITS OR SF	RATIO PER	ZONING REQ.	PROVIDED	INDOOR	OUTDOOR	TH	RATIO
BUILDING A	121	0.5	61	81	80	1		0.67
BUILDING B	77	0.5	39	55	54	1		0.71
TOWNHOUSES	9	0.5	5	18			18	2.00
COMMERCIAL (Excludes 2,000 SF)	3,750	1/400	9	18		18		3.13
TOTAL			114	172	134	20	18	

### **Bicycle Parking**

Where only 211 bicycle parking spaces are required, the project is proposing to provide 282 bicycle spaces, including space for 37 cargo bikes.

	REQUIRED			PROVIDED				
	UNITS OR SF	RATIO PER	ZONING REQ.	PROVIDED	BLDG A	BLDG B	OUTDOOR	TH
RESIDENTIAL	207	1.0	207	270	141	93	0	36
COMMERCIAL	5,725	1/1500	4	12	0		12	0
TOTAL			211	282	141	93	12	36
			CARGO BIKES	37	21	7		9

### **Proposed versus Allowable Project Size:**

While the project is eligible under State Density Bonus Law for 207 dwelling units with a Floor Area Ratio of 3.375, and even though the project is providing a substantial 49.3% of the project as larger family units, the proposed Floor Area Ratio of 2.96 is substantially below the allowable. This equates to the project being 39,670 square feet smaller, equating to roughly a full story lower, than what is allowable under the Density Bonus.

### **State Density Bonus**

As a project which will be providing 15% of the base zoning units as affordable to Very-Low-Income households, the project is eligible for a 50% density bonus above the base zoning for a total of 207 units.

STATE DENSITY BONUS CALCULATIONS	
LOT SIZE (ACRES)	2.18
DENSITY FACTOR (DU/AC)	63
BASE ZONING UNITS (ROUNDS UP)	138
PERCENTAGE OF VERY-LOW-INCOME UNITS PROVIDED	15%
NUMBER OF VERY-LOW-INCOME UNITS PROVIDED	21
PERCENTAGE DENSITY BONUS EARNED	50%
NUMBER OF DENSITY BONUS UNITS	69
TOTAL PROJECT INCLUDING BONUS UNITS	207

### **Summary / Description of Requested Density Bonus Waivers**

Under State Density Bonus Law, the project is eligible for the following waivers of base zoning standards which would otherwise have the effect of physically precluding the construction of the project at the permitted density bonus of 50% above the base zoning:

- Waiver to exceed the base zoning height limit that would otherwise physically preclude the construction of the project with a density bonus of 50% above the base zoning.
- Waiver from the base zoning FAR that would otherwise physically preclude the construction of the floor area of the project with a density bonus of 50% above the base zoning.
- Waiver from the base zoning Solar Plane on Adams that would otherwise physically preclude the construction of the project with a density bonus of 50% above the base zoning.

### **Summary / Description of Density Bonus and Concessions**

Under State Density Bonus Law, the project is eligible for 3 concessions from base zoning standards which result in identifiable and actual cost reductions.

- Concession #1: The project is proposing to use a concession to eliminate the construction costs which would otherwise be necessary to provide additional rooftop decks to fully meet the Open Space. The project will however still be providing a total of 22,390 square feet of open space in a mix of common and private areas spread across the ground level, podium level and level 6 roof decks (see Sheet A0.1B).
- Concession #2: The project is proposing to use a concession to eliminate the PUD requirement required for the Planned Residential/Commercial Overlay District (per section 20.24.030.D.1) to reduce the additional time and cost of submitting another application that is not necessary for the project.
- Concession #3: The project is proposing to use a concession to have non-commercial spaces located on San Pablo to reduce the cost of constructing additional space elsewhere to accommodate these required project elements.

### **City of Albany Inclusionary Housing Summary**

The City's inclusionary housing ordinance requires the project to provide 15% of the base zoning units as inclusionary units (exclusive of units added by the State Density Bonus). To meet this requirement, the project will be providing 21 Very-Low-Income units spread across all unit sizes in a mix that is proportional to the overall project mix as follows:

ALBANY INCLUSIONARY REQUIREMENTS						
LOT SIZE (ACRES)				2.18		
DENSITY FACTOR (DU/AC)				63		
BASE ZONING UNITS				138		
PERCENTAGE OF INCUSIONARY UNITS REQUIRED				15%		
NUMBER OF INCLUSIONARY UNITS REQUIRED				21		
STUDIO	LOFT	1-BR	2-BR	3-BR	3-BR TH	TOTAL
2	1	8	8	1	1	21
10%	5%	38%	38%	5%	5%	100%

### **Project Benefits:**

The project will benefit Albany by providing a high-quality infill development that will create much needed housing and well-designed retail while enhancing an already vibrant walkable area. To enhance the public realm, the project is proposing sidewalk widenings on San Pablo and Clay, three pedestrian connections between San Pablo and Clay, a publicly accessible park and dog walk area fronting Clay, and two publicly accessible plazas fronting San Pablo. The project is designed with 49.3% of the project, 102 total units, as larger 2 and 3-bedroom units to house families. And finally, the project will also be providing 21 units which will be affordable to very-low-income households in Albany.

Thank you for your consideration of this application.