



STAFF REPORT

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

December 13, 2022

TO: Honorable Chair and Commissioners

FROM: David Loya, Director of Community Development

PREPARER: Delores Freitas, Senior Planner

DATE: December 07, 2022

TITLE: **Approve a Design Review and Planned Development Permit Review of the Valley East Lofts Multifamily Development Project**

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Planning Commission approve the Valley East Lofts Planned Development Permit Amendment and Design Review Permit by adopting: 1) a California Environmental Quality Act Exemption per §15332, Class 32 - In-Fill Development Projects; and then 2) the Action with Findings and Conditions of Approval and proposed plan set.

INTRODUCTION:

The project entails Planned Development Permit and Design Review for a vacant 0.6 acre parcel located on Valley East Boulevard. The proposed project includes the development of a 19,777 square foot, three-story multifamily housing project consisting of 22 units, including studio, one bedroom, and two bedroom units types. Planning Commission approval is required for findings related to design and the project's pre-existing :PD overlay. The Planning Commission's action will approve the Valley East Lofts project as submitted and incorporate the project site into the Valley East Centre Planned Development complex.

BACKGROUND:

The Valley East loft project proposes a 22-unit residential development that will be the final infill project of a vacant site along the cusp of Valley West and Valley East Boulevards. The site is already encumbered with an existing Planned Development overlay based on a historic zoning approval; at this time the applicant has submitted a request for the project to be incorporated into the original Planned Development Permit which created the Valley East Centre project.

The current site zoning is Commercial-General with a Planned Development Combining Zone overlay. The original Planned Development overlay for the site was approved in 1988, which encompassed the majority of the area south of the Valley West Shopping Center and north of Valley West/Valley East Boulevards. This project did not come to fruition and portions of the original Planned Development were subsequently developed with new projects. The Valley East Centre Planned Development was approved directly to the east in 2002, creating a mixed use residential and commercial office complex. At the time of the Valley East Centre approval, the Planning Commission reviewed and approved the project but modified the proposal to require a minimum of four residential units, at least 550 square feet in size, with an aggregate residential floor area of not

less than 2,800 square feet. These required residential units could be configured in any location within the Planned Development Area, if reviewed and approved by the Design Review Commission.

The Planning Commission has now taken on the role of this review and the project now proposes to incorporate an additional parcel into the Valley East Planned Development and increase the residential unit count to 22 units. This proposal is in keeping with the original approval, which required a minimum of four units, in any configuration approved by the Commission.

DISCUSSION:

The project proposes twenty-two residential units provided in a variety of types and sizes, including studio, one bedroom, and two-bedroom units. Twenty-two vehicular parking spaces are proposed including two garage spaces, motorcycle parking, and bike parking. Access is proposed off of Valley West Boulevard. The project includes access, parking, landscaping, trash/recycling, and on-site drainage improvements. Community sewer and water services will serve the parcel.

The project site contains a Planned Development (:PD) overlay, which can be utilized by the decision makers to grant flexibility to standards in certain circumstances.

Requested modifications to standards

1. Private/shared open space and storage requirements

Each multi-family residential project, except duplexes, is required to provide permanently maintained storage area and outdoor open recreation space for each dwelling unit at set sizes. All units have access to shared open space and storage space, and each unit has private open space provided through patios or terraces; however, the project does not meet the specific size requirements of these areas for all proposed units.

Staff has prepared findings to support approval of the project as submitted, based on the flexibility of the :PD overlay to allow for development of projects that benefit the community in exchange for additional flexibility to project design standards, and findings of architectural compatibility. Project referral comments are incorporated into the project's findings and conditions of approval.

Staff recommends the Planning Commission approve the Valley East Lofts Planned Development Permit Amendment and Design Review Permit by adopting the environmental determination first and subsequently adopting the draft Action that includes the Findings of Approval, Conditions of Approval, and draft plan set. The recommendation is based on the department's determination the proposed infill development project with conditions of approval incorporated is in compliance with the Arcata General Plan and Land Use Code and will be a benefit to the Valley West neighborhood and City as a whole.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA):

The project qualifies for a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) §15332, Class 32 - In-Fill Development Projects Exemption as further described in the environmental review findings (Attachment A, Exhibit 1). This CEQA recommendation is based on the proposed application materials and draft findings and conditions of approval submitted to the Planning Commission for the residential infill development project.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A. Draft Action (PDF)

Attachment B. Valley East Lofts Plan Set (PDF)