

## **Project Narrative**

### ***Proposed Residential Development at 8375 Talbert Avenue***

#### **Existing Land Use and Condition**

This roughly two acre, rectangular site is currently improved with three single-family detached residences in a large-lot fashion with supporting structures, such as detached garages and a metal work shed associated with the 8371 Talbert Avenue residence. These improvements consist of a substantially less intense land use than the abutting parcels and the general neighborhood. The site's western edge slopes to a non-functioning drainage culvert with a row of trees running with this north/south culvert.

Past land use at the project site has primarily been agricultural, along with low density residential. The site was discovered to have no major environmental concerns.

#### **Abutting and Adjacent Land Uses and Context**

The site abutting to the west is a cemetery (part of (Saint Vincent De Paul Catholic Church) the size of several major city blocks. The abutting site to the west is improved on its far eastern third with a church (Saint Vincent De Paul Catholic Church) and support offices with asphalt surface parking lots surrounding those structures. To the site's immediate north are about ten single-story detached residences. To the opposite of those residences, along Jalm Drive, is a multi-family development of one and two story homes. To the site's immediate east is a 4-lane divided arterial, Newland Street. On Newland's opposite bound is a two-story single family development (constructed by The Olson Company in about 2005). (Newland is the City limit divider and this past Olson development is within the Fountain Valley city limits.) To its south is another 4-lane divided arterial, Talbert Avenue. Along the south side of Talbert are single-family detached residences. At the southeast corner of Talbert and Newland is a two-story multi-family development.

Aside from the cemetery, the neighborhood is almost exclusively residential, shifting to commercial and retail uses only as one approaches its nearest north/south commercial corridor to its west, Beach Boulevard. The neighborhood is also effectively built-out. Most housing appears to be constructed roughly in the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s. There is no noticeable architectural style or unified character for the area though almost all development appears to be of good quality.

#### **Project Description**

The Project proposes to redevelop this infill site with 34 attached townhome units, ranging from two to three stories. All units will feature attached, two car, side-by-side garages. All units will be for-sale, three of which are designated as moderate-income affordable. Units range from 1,258 square feet to 1,846 square feet. Bedrooms range from three to four, and bathrooms from

two and a half to three. All units will be sold and owned legally as condominiums. The community will be governed by Conditions, Covenants, and Restrictions (CC&Rs), administered and overseen by a Homeowners Association (HOA). As a matter of practice, the applicant remains highly-involved with the HOA for typically ten years to ensure the HOA is operating effectively before largely shifting responsibility to residents.

### **Application Intent**

The intent of the City application is to provide all information to allow for a thorough and responsible public review process that ultimately allows the applicant to secure all necessary entitlements to develop the project as proposed. Olson understands those entitlements to be a General Plan Amendment and Zoning Map Amendment (to change both from Residential Low Density to Residential Medium Density) , Conditional Use Permit (CUP), Tentative Tract Map, (3) waivers and (1) concession afforded by the Density Bonus Law (referenced in the General Application), and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance via a MND.

The Applicant requests that the CUP also consider the necessity of a retaining wall up to 8' tall along the western property line. The grade of the existing church parking lot abutting the site on its western edge is significantly lower than the site's. Furthermore, the site will need to receive some fill for a more even surface for construction of the far western building and site improvements in that area. This condition will necessitate a greater than two feet retention wall.

More specifically, the height of the retaining (finished stucco) wall will vary from about 4' (measured from the footing of the existing retaining wall along the abandoned drainage culvert) to about 8' tall at its highest point near the northwest corner of the site, away from Talbert Avenue. Running on top of the retaining wall will be a not-to-exceed 6' (also finished stucco) perimeter wall (as measured from the subject site's side). A wall section graphic on the civil's grading plan visually explains this.

### **Project Concept**

The conceptual site plan proposes two points of ingress/egress. The first is off of Newland Street with a single spine road along the length of the northern property line providing access to the entire community while doubling as a buffer to the abutting residences to the north. That buffer will be strengthened by a row of trees, landscaping and potentially a higher wall along this sensitive northern boundary. The community is proposed to be gated at both ingress/egress points. On-site vehicle circulation is two way. A secondary entrance (ingress/egress) is proposed at the farthest west drive aisle at Talbert Avenue. Drive aisles extending from the spine road, perpendicular to Talbert Avenue, provide access to the individual units. Buildings correspondingly run perpendicular to Talbert. Two-story units are featured for the northern-most unit of all buildings across the site. This provides a two story buffer for the existing single family residences backing to the shared north property line. From there, all plan types increase to three stories, thereby placing the higher intensity uses nearer to Talbert Avenue where it is best suited. Three courtyards (or paseos) are interspersed throughout the community with a larger central green open space serving as the community's focal point for social life and recreation. A shade

structure with tables and seating and a fire place with ample sectional-style seating is planned for this more major, centralized paseo. Virtually all front elevations front onto these paseos, some with enclosed patio spaces, to create a sense both a sense of community and provide an attractive open space view from all units. Along the entire stretch of the Talbert frontage, a “dry creek” bio-swale is planned to collect and treat storm water. It will also double as an attractive semi-natural feature and a buffer to the heavily truck-trafficked Talbert corridor. Buildings face the bio-swale section with side elevations exposed to the street (i.e., no wall) to maintain openness to the neighborhood and avoid a walled-off appearance.

## **Architectural Style**

The Project is designed in a Santa Barbara style with strong eave cornice details (at enhanced locations), gable-end faces and simple shed roofs with low profile Spanish roof tiles. The style exhibits faux gable-end vent recesses, sculpted stucco sill trim, decorative trim with ceramic tile inserts, and smooth stucco surrounds at featured front doors or windows. Other details that the style brings are stucco battered wing-walls, arched openings at porches, deck openings with corbel details and corbel adorned details at cantilevers. Metal railing with accented scrolls, bay windows, Stucco Spanish hood entry awnings and exposed truss tails at low porches further expresses the style.

## **Landscape Architecture & Concept**

The landscape concept provides a comprehensive, layered landscape palette with thematic street trees that blends with the proposed architecture. Water efficient irrigation system, plants, vines and groundcovers will be installed within the HOA areas, incorporating water conservation measures and a low-water, drought tolerant landscape.

## **SB1818 (State Density Bonus Law)-Related Concession and Waivers Sought**

As afforded by SB1818 and in compliance with Section 230.26 of the Huntington Beach Zoning Code, the project would provide 10 percent of the total unit count as moderate-income affordable units. In exchange, a 5% density increase is sought. Due to the provision of 10 percent moderate income, SB 1818 allows one concession or incentive to reduce the cost of the housing project. Additionally, SB 1818 allows an unlimited number of waivers of any development standard that will have the effect of physically precluding the construction of the housing project at the density proposed.

Olson requests the below waivers and a concession with a brief explanation for each:

1. Common and Private Open Space Dimensions: The applicant requests a waiver of the common and private open space minimum dimension development standards to allow the open space dimensions proposed. As referenced in the table on Sheet L-6, roughly half of the proposed common and private open space meets minimum dimensions. However, total open space proposed is significantly greater (17,779 sf versus 14,423 sf) than the amount of open space that the Huntington Beach Zoning Code requires. Because of the significant play and articulation of the elevations, particularly those fronting onto the

paseos, meeting the Huntington Beach Zoning Code open space minimum dimensions would not allow the project as physically proposed. If the project provided open space at the required common and private open space dimensions, there would be a reduction in the density of the project which would not be permitted under State Density Bonus Law. Nevertheless, with the waiver of the common and private open space development standards, the end-result provides a thoughtful configuration of private patios fronting onto the paseo, contributing to the “outdoor room” effect whose orientation encourages socializing in a visually-stimulating and intimate environment. **Adhering to strict minimum dimensional standards would preclude the total unit count envisioned and in turn, the affordable component proposed.** When the waiver of the minimum open space dimensions is taken into account, the project would substantially exceed the City-required amount of open space for the units proposed. Further, the design of the open space provides ample usage and attractive open space for the residents, thereby meeting the City’s goals.

2. Potential SCE-Required Transformers and Related in the Setback: The City does not allow dry utility improvements like transformers to be placed above-ground in the setback. Because of City undergrounding requirements, it is likely that SCE will require a large vault and a smaller transformer pad within the Talbert setback to accommodate the Rule 20 requirement. (The timing for specifics is reliant upon SCE processes and is likely to be unknown for some time.) Should the City maintain both the undergrounding requirement and the relevant setback requirement, these utility improvements could only occur on-site outside the setback area. **Placing those utility appurtenances on-site would result in the reduction of dwelling units since a location within the project site outside the setback area would need to be found and there is no adequate space with the residential density and amenities proposed.** As such, the project requests a waiver of the development standard so as to allow the above-ground transformer within the setback area. At the same time, Olson would work with the City and SCE to reduce the size and amount of appurtenances to a degree that could then allow on-site installation. Should this circumstance prove out later in the SCE process, such that the size and amount of appurtenances are reduced, this waiver could no longer be necessary.
3. Front Yard Setback Relief for Talbert & Newland Corner Unit: The corner unit at Building 1 features a second floor balcony and covered patio that extend into the 15’ front yard setback, reducing the setback to roughly 7’11”. This encroachment is more than the amount of encroachment that zoning code allows. If this balcony and covered patio were to be pared back, the building then simply becomes out of compliance with the upper-floor setback instead of the front yard setback. Aside from the aesthetic and open space benefit of a balcony, **if the building were to shift inward to achieve both front yard and upper-floor setback, the corner unit would be effectively lost, precluding the project with the density proposed.** As such, with respect to Building 1’s Talbert and Newland corner unit, the project requests a waiver to allow a second floor balcony and covered patio extending into the front yard setback and again, thereby reducing that setback to roughly 7’11”.

4. Relief from the City's Utilities Undergrounding ordinance at Newland & Talbert:  
Pursuant to Government Code Section 65915(d), the Applicant requests an incentive or concession for relief from Huntington Beach Municipal Code requirements that would require the undergrounding of above-ground utilities along Newland Street frontage or across the street in the City of Fountain Valley. While the Applicant would underground all existing and proposed utilities in conformance with Huntington Beach Municipal Code requirements on-site, and along the Talbert Avenue, relief from any Newland Street utility undergrounding would result in identifiable and actual cost reductions, consistent with Government Code Section 65915(k) that would provide for affordable housing costs. Undergrounding utilities along Newland Avenue and in Fountain Valley are very costly (i.e., the costs of undergrounding in this location are estimated to be at least \$350,000). Undergrounding utility approvals would also result in schedule delays (18-24 months beyond the typical construction schedule) and this would jeopardize lower interest construction loans through the delays in receiving regulatory approvals from various agencies. Further, the intended aesthetic benefit is greatly compromised (all above-ground poles and appurtenances would remain above-ground for technical reasons and only a few wires could be undergrounded with the rest remaining). As a result of granting the requested incentive or concession, there would be no specific adverse impact on public health and safety or on any real property that is listed in the California Register of Historical Resources for which there is no feasible method to satisfactorily mitigate or avoid the specific adverse impact.