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Re: La Veranda, Cesar Chavez & Soto; Abode Communities

## Review and Recommendations of the Design Review Advisory Committee (DRAC)

On Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June the DRAC met to review revised and refined design of the La Veranda Project. This project was previously reviewed on 5<sup>th</sup> April. At that time the project was generally favorably received with some concerns about the design, vehicular access, treatment of the alley and lack of detail regarding the landscape design. The revised project addressed these concerns.

The DRAC and Urban Design Consultant in the meeting provided these comments:

### **Urban Design**

Access and security are not clearly addressed and how this might be managed. While the portions of the project located on either side of the alley are connected by a second floor walkway it appeared that there would also be grade level pedestrian access. Associated with this there also appears to be alley access for trash collection. How trash and pedestrian access is to be managed needs clarification. Given that this alley is substandard it should be verified whether trash will be collected via the alley or by some other means and how site access will be secured. Trash collection should not create an undue disturbance to the residents.

Additionally, the paseo at the corner of Matthews and Cesar Chavez should be secured along with the pedestrian and garage entries during the evening or when the retail/commercial spaces are not operational. Ensure that the automobile security gate is placed in the appropriate place to provide a vehicular reservoir that satisfies the City's transportation department and that the residential parking is secure at all times.

Along with physical security, appropriate lighting should be considered.

Verify that the pedestrian bridge has sufficient clearance for vehicles and trash trucks. Also ensure that the structure is not an attractive nuisance for non residents to access the site or provide graffiti opportunities.

The plans as presented indicate a flat site. If the site slopes the elevations and plans should be adjusted accordingly.

The entrance to the units on Soto should have a more prominent and obvious presence.

The retail/commercial elevation at the ground floor level along Cesar Chavez is unduly long and monolithic and should be broken up to provide a finer grain and greater articulation compatible with the neighborhood in general. There should be multiple entrances.

### **Architecture and Buildings**

The upper floor elevations along Cesar Chavez are greatly improved, providing a clearer composition and cohesion while still providing rhythm and interest.

As stated above the retail/commercial elevation is too monolithic. Interest was expressed for the possibility to allow for smaller storefront spaces. While the storefront window 'frame' is aesthetically attractive it is of concern that it might provide an opportunity for extended occupancy, unwanted storage or skateboard abuse.

There is concern about the vertical screening element pickets projecting down below the lower edge of structure along the Cesar Chavez elevation.

A sign program should be developed that integrates well into the architecture.

The Matthews and Soto elevations provide interest and composition and work well.

The ground floor retail should have a minimum of 15 feet floor to floor and the larger upstairs community spaces should have 10 foot clear ceiling heights.

The materiality of the elevations is good and the colorful nature of the project lends interest.

### **Landscape and Open Space**

The opening up of the corner at Cesar Chavez and Matthews is to be commended.

It would be desirable to create public open space along Soto south of the building by pushing the fencing back so that it is flush with the face of the building.

The 'greening' of the alley is considered to be attractive and beneficial and is commended provided it is well maintained.

The juxtaposition of laundry and kid's play structure is commended provided it gives clear viewing of playground from the laundry allowing parent's to observe the play activity while washing clothes.

Consider the possibility of a 'green' roof.

It would be desirable to provide some community garden boxes on the Matthews site also. Boxes would be preferred to be taller, possibly standing height. Basic tool storage and water should be provided.

The fitness and jogging path is appreciated, although not entirely clear from the plans as to how this works. Consideration should be considered for basic fitness exercise stations for pull up, push up, sit up and stretching.

The landscape material palette is to be commended but the palo verde may prove to be a messy tree. The artificial turf is not considered to be a desirable option. DG, paving blocks or planking such as resysta might be alternatives. The outdoor 'lawn' or patio should be provided with more shade, whether with trees or trellises.

### **Conclusion**

This project is highly commendable and with issues addressed would be a significant asset to the community. Some aspects of the design are unclear as no perspectives of the final design were provided. The interior elevations were not provided and should be of the same quality as the exterior elevations. It is recommended that Abode address these comments and provide renderings to describe the project.