



PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

ITEM NO. 5.1

DATE: June 17, 2025

TO: Chairperson and Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Steve Riley, Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Hearing to consider a request to approve a Planned Development (PD) 25-001, Subdivision (SUB) 20-004, and Site Plan Design Review (SPDR) 21-001 to allow a two-story, attached, 13-unit multi-family, townhome-style development. The project will consist of all rental units that would be grouped on one lot. The units will consist of either three or four bedrooms and range in size from 1,400 to 1,900 square feet per unit. Each unit will have an attached two-car garage. The project will reconstruct the curb, gutter, and sidewalk along the project frontages (East Avenue and Dolores Street), underground all utilities, and construct a new shared driveway to access the site from Dolores Street.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission adopt resolutions recommending the City Council:

1. Find the project is Categorically Exempt under the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per Section 15332, In-Fill Projects, and Direct the Planning Manager to file a Notice of Exemption in accordance with the provisions of CEQA, subject to project approval; and
2. Approve Subdivision (SUB) 20-004 and Site Plan Design Review (SPDR) 21-001; and
3. Adopt an Ordinance authorizing Planned Development (PD) 25-001.

SUMMARY

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing single-family home and develop the approximately 0.62-acre site with 13 attached two-story townhouse units and one attached Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU). The project will consist of all rental units that would be grouped on one lot. The proposal includes a traditional architectural style adapted to the townhome product type. Unit sizes range from approximately 1,400 square feet to approximately 1,900 square feet with the option of three or four bedrooms. Each unit will have an attached two-car garage. The project will include one unit for rent to a very low-income (50% of Area Median Income) household.

The project site is located at the southeast corner of East Avenue and Dolores Street (see Attachment 1 - Location Map). Four guest parking spaces, including one accessible space, would be located on-site. Approximately 50 percent of the on-site landscaping will include California native plants with a total of 22

trees planted around the site including a variety of shrubs, grasses, perennials, succulents, and subshrubs.

The applicant will reconstruct the curb, gutter, and sidewalk along the project frontages (East Avenue and Dolores Street), construct a new driveway to provide access to the site from Dolores Street, and underground all electric and communication lines along the project frontage.

The applicant has agreed to contribute \$50,000 towards intersection improvements at East Avenue and Dolores Street. The Engineering Division is working on multiple active and planned Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) along East Avenue. The contribution could be used for corridor improvements such as permanent traffic calming measures or bike and pedestrian enhancements. The improvements will be completed at a later date as part of a CIP.

The proposed project includes the following entitlements:

- Planned Development - Residential (PD) 25-001 would establish new residential development standards based on the T4 Neighborhood (T4N) and replace the existing default Planned Development zone.
- Subdivision (SUB) 20-004 (Tentative Parcel Map 11527) would merge the existing two parcels into one parcel, establish property lines and site layout, and secure associated public improvements.
- Site Plan Design Review (SPDR) 21-001 would ensure the architecture and landscape design of the project complies with the City's Design Standards and Guidelines (DSG).

DISCUSSION

PROJECT SITE CONTEXT

The project site is generally flat and consists of two legal parcels. The applicant proposes to combine the two parcels into one single parcel. An existing single-family home is located on the property including several recreational vehicles and a storage container. The existing house will be demolished, and the recreation vehicles and storage container will be removed from the site.

The site is surrounded by existing residential development, including single-family development to the east and west, multi-family to the south, and a mix of single and multi-family residential to the north. The project site is approximately one mile away from Downtown Livermore, located near multiple public transit stops, and has access to public services and utilities. Table 1: summarizes the existing and surrounding land uses.

Table 1

	<u>General Plan Designation</u>	<u>Zoning Designation</u>	<u>Existing Land Use</u>
North	Urban High Residential (UH-2)	Suburban Multiple Residential (RG) Zone	Single/ Multifamily Residential
South	Urban High Residential (UH-2)	Planned Unit Development (PUD) 116-78	Multifamily Residential
East	Urban High Residential (UH-2)	Planned Development (PD)	Single Family Residential

West	Urban Medium High Residential (UMH)	Residential Low Density (RL) Zone	Single Family Residential
<u>Subject Site</u>	Urban High Residential (UH-2)	Planned Development (PD)	Single Family Residential

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND STAFF ANALYSIS

General Plan

The General Plan designation for the subject site is Urban High Residential (UH-2). The Urban High Residential designation accommodates the highest range of residential densities in the City. It allows a density range of 8 to 14 units per acre and is seen in the central and outlying areas of the City. Townhouses and duplex housing types are common under this designation. The General Plan allows residential density to be based on a district-wide basis (Livermore General Plan Land Use Element, p. 3-10). The current density of the surrounding neighborhood is 12.7 units per acre. The proposed project will increase density in this area to approximately 13 units per acre. Thus, district-wide density will remain within the permitted density range of the UH-2 designation.

Zoning

The project site is currently zoned Planned Development (PD), which requires the project adhere to default residential zoning standards or adopt a development-specific Planned Development District tailored to the site. Generally, a Planned Development District is intended for development projects that require more flexible development standards that allow the project to address site constraints in a manner that could not be achieved in a conventional zone. A Planned Development zone must conform to the requirements of the General Plan.

Multifamily development of 14 units or less under the PD zone is required to conform to either the Multiple Family Residential (MFR) or T4 Neighborhood (T4N) Zone, whichever is closest to the project density. The proposed project most closely aligns with the T4N Zone, making it the default zone for the project.

The proposed PD standards for the project are compatible with the surrounding residential neighborhoods and conform to the size and shape of the site. The proposed standards maintain a cohesive transition between the existing residential neighborhood and the project site through site planning, use of setbacks and separations, design features, and landscape design. The PD prescribes precise frontage design types, setbacks, and building height and width maximums for the townhome style buildings. This eliminates the possibility to expand the townhomes through building additions (building additions are uncommon for townhome projects).

The proposed PD standards differ from three T4N zoning standards. The proposed variations are described below:

1. The T4N zone limits building height to 35 feet within the front 90 feet of the property (measured from the East Avenue right-of-way) and to 24 feet in height beyond 90 feet. The 24-foot height limit applies to the southeast corner of unit 8 which is approximately 28' in height. Unit 8 exceeds the 24 foot maximum height limit at the rear of the lot. The proposed PD would allow the 35-foot height limit to extend back to accommodate the additional building height but complies with the overall

maximum height limit of 35 feet to accommodate unit 8.

2. The project includes porches and stoops which are a required frontage type in the T4N zone. The T4N zone allows a maximum encroachment of 5 feet into the required setback for a porch or a stoop. The second variation would allow the proposed porches along Dolores Street and East Ave to encroach 8 feet into the setback. The encroachment will allow the project to meet the required minimum porch depth of 8 feet and provide usable yard and open space within the required setback. All porches will maintain the minimum required setback of five feet.
3. The Townhouse Building Type (LDC 5.01.090) limits the width of the main building body for each unit to 36 feet. Units 1 through 12 comply with this standard but Units 13, which includes an ADU, is 44 feet wide and exceeds the maximum allowed building width. The third variation removes the unit width requirement.

Staff supports the requested variations. The rectangularly shaped corner lot makes it difficult to construct a building at the rear of the lot and comply with the T4N rear lot height standard. Furthermore, the southern edge of the property adjoins landscape and a private circulation driveway for the residential community to the south.

An eight-foot encroachment into the setback is desirable along Dolores Street and East Avenue to meet the minimum porch depth requirement per the Development Code (LDC 4.03.050). The encroachments allow each street-facing unit to have a usable porch. The porches also add detailing and human scale to the architecture while maintaining a five-foot minimum setback to accommodate landscape.

The excess building width for unit 13 allows the construction of an ADU and provides additional housing. The PD allows development flexibility and permits the requested variations. The following standards apply to this project:

	<u>Allowed in T4N Zoning</u>	<u>Proposed</u>	<u>Complies with T4N Zone</u>
<u>Front Setback (East Ave)</u>	15' min. 30' max.	15'	Yes
<u>Street Side (Dolores St.)</u>	10' min. 15' max.	13'	Yes
<u>Building Height</u>	35' max. 24' max, 1.5 stories beyond 90 ft of front property line	28' overall, two stories	No - Unit 8 exceeds the 24' max, but proposed PD will allow up to 35 feet to address this issue.
<u>Building Width (per unit)</u>	18' min. 36' max	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Units 1 to 8) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ width 23' • (Units 9 to 12) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ width 28'-8" • (Unit 13) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ width 44' (includes ADU) 	Units 1 through 12 do comply. No - Unit 13 exceeds the max width, but proposed PD will allow up to 44' to address this issue.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Unit 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 173 sf open space in rear yard; front porch area 166 sf • (Units 2 to 7) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ open space 173 sf in rear yard; • (Unit 8) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 462 sf yard/ porch area within side street setback; 	
<u>Open Space/ Yard Area (per unit)</u>	100 sf/ unit min.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Unit 9) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 240 sf yard/ porch area within side street setback; • (Units 10 to 12) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 115 sf yard/ porch area within side street setback • (Unit 13) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 110 sf yard/ porch area ◦ (ADU) 104 sf open space area 	Yes

For each proposed variation from the default zoning, the Livermore Development Code (LDC 3.04.030.J.1) requires Residential Planned Developments to provide an added design feature that is proportional to the degree of variation from the default zoning. The City only considers a design feature that exceeds what is otherwise required by the City or by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Examples include:

- Public features not generally available in the neighborhood of a standard zoning district
- Provision of public, neighborhood amenities
- Diversification of building sizes and types, increased landscaping, or extraordinary architecture

The proposed project meets the Planned Development design feature requirements. The project includes increased landscaping on-site of which approximately 50% are native to California. The proposed architecture is of high quality and incorporates design features as recommended by the Design Standards and Guidelines. Additionally, the applicant has agreed to provide a monetary contribution of \$50,000 for intersection improvements for the benefit of the public.

SUBDIVISION

The project entitlements include a Tentative Parcel Map to combine the two individual parcels into one parcel in conformance with Part 10 of the Livermore Development Code (and Government Code and the Subdivision Map Act, by reference). The purpose of the City's subdivision ordinance is to regulate the division of land consistent with the Livermore General Plan and facilitate orderly development of the community. The applicant is the owner of both parcels. A parcel line between the two parcels will be removed to merge the lot.

The lot layout and configuration establish the footprint size of the two buildings and enable clustering consistent with the intent of the Planned Development District. The project has access to public utilities including water and sewer. The development would increase the need for public utilities that would be maintained by the City. The project would be required to pay for the increase in public services at the time of Building Permit issuance and through user fees. Site Access (ingress and egress) from Dolores Street was evaluated by the Livermore Pleasanton Fire Department, Livermore Sanitation, and the Engineering Division for conformance with the applicable standards and deemed adequate to maintain health and safety.

SITE PLAN DESIGN REVIEW

Site Plan and Design Review (SPDR) 21-001 proposes the development's site layout, landscape design, and building architecture.

Site Plan

The site plan establishes efficient building orientation and logically relates to the street, pedestrian walkways, and adjacent buildings. The development includes two main buildings oriented to provide appropriate spacing and positioning to promote pedestrian connectivity, maintain privacy and use the site efficiently. The building facing Dolores Street displays strong design character and is visually compatible with the existing development to the south. The characteristics of the development such as height, massing, setbacks, materials and architectural style improve and complement the surrounding area. The project design enhances the views for the public from East Avenue and Dolores Street.

Units 1 through 8 have access to usable private open space in their back yards along the eastern edge of the site. Units 9 through 13 have front yards and usable front porches. The Design Standard and Guidelines (p.128) encourage small-lot development building entries to be located on the front facade and have direct access to a sidewalk. The project meets the intent of this standard with porches and entries facing a public street.

The individual garages are accessed by a common drive aisle located behind the residential structures that face the public street. This achieves the Design Guidelines goal of minimizing views of garages (DSG, Residential Standards, p.128). The proposed site plan achieves the following overall goals for residential design set forth in the Livermore Residential Design Standards and Guidelines (p.120):

- Provide high quality housing for all sectors of the housing market
 - Response: The project provides high quality townhome-style rental units with floor plans and

sizes that will diversify the mix of housing types and densities of the surrounding area and accommodate the diverse demands of the housing market.

- Decrease the visual prominence of the automobile and related facilities, such as streets and parking areas, in residential neighborhoods.
 - Response: The project provides attached garages for each unit that are accessed via a shared drive aisle. The internal drive aisle is located behind the row of townhomes fronting along Dolores Street.
- Encourage a harmonious development pattern that respects and responds to the character of the surrounding built and natural environments
 - Response: The development would be appropriately setback from the existing residential developments to the east and south.

Architecture

The proposed architecture and materials reflect traditional architecture prevalent in the older sections of Livermore, south of downtown. They include cross-gabled roof forms and individual porch elements for each unit. Materials include traditional horizontal lap siding and stucco, wood posts, and a combination of stone and brick wainscoting. All doors and windows are wrapped in wood trim which gives them a shadowed, recessed definition. Finally, gabled façades are further detailed with faux vents and knee braces. The building forms employ a variation of façade articulation to distinguish the attached dwelling units from one and other. In addition, the architecture wraps façade treatments to the street facing sides of the buildings which creates an inviting presence. These architectural features and the articulation reduce the massing and create a human scale. The project includes appropriate site planning, building massing, vertical and horizontal articulation, the use of conventional elements and materials, and neutral color palettes that conform with the Residential Design Standards and Guidelines (DSG pgs. 129 -130, 133, 140):

- Guidelines C.1.1.2. Building massing should be varied by employing a variety of techniques, such as recessed porches, bay windows, dormers and varying planes or setbacks. As appropriate to the style of the house, the roof forms should be varied. Roof forms to be employed include hipped roofs, gabled roofs, varying roof pitches, side-to-side gables, front-to-back gables or various combinations.
- Guideline C.1.1.3. Façade components should correspond to the scale of the human form. This is accomplished by visually breaking up façades into smaller components with elements such as windows, wall insets, balconies, ledges and trim and by stepping back upper stories.
- Standard C.3.1.1. Façades shall be designed to include entries, porches and other architectural elements that relate to the human scale.
- Standard C.8.1.1 The form, color and texture of the roof should be an integral part of the building design and compatible with both the natural and built settings.

- Standard C.8.1.2 Roofline variations may be used to demarcate primary building entrances.

Building fronts and entrances break down the mass of the structure consistent with the Design Standards and Guidelines. Windows are generally vertical and related in design, recessed or framed, to add relief and further articulate the wall plane.

- Standard C.4.1.2 Windows shall be used as architectural elements that add relief to the façade and wall surface.
- Guideline C.4.1.5 Windows should be vertically oriented, in order to relate to the human form, unless horizontal windows are appropriate to the style, or are necessary in the particular application.
- Standard C.1.2.8 Accentuating the ground floor of the building by making it thicker or more substantial visually than upper stories.

The project style utilizes a distinct and a varied palette of materials including brick, stone, stucco, and lap siding. The proposed colors vary in tone, ranging from light, medium and darker earth tones. The color scheme is compatible with each other and the project setting in conformance with the City's Design Guidelines (DSG p140):

- Guideline C.7.1.1. Exterior building colors should be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood setting and should be in keeping with the geographic and climatic conditions specific to Livermore.
- Guideline C.7.1.2. Accent colors should be used to enhance details such as trim.

Front Porches

In the Transect Zones, the townhouse building type is required to have either a porch or stoop frontage treatment. The project provides porches on all street-facing units and stoops on all units that face the internal driveway. The front porches comply with the required frontage standards. The PD provides flexibility by allowing an eight-foot encroachment into the setback to comply with the required minimum width and depth for porches.

Parking and Traffic

Parking is provided in attached garages consistent with the Livermore Development Code (Chapter 4.04: Parking Standards) at a ratio of two required parking spaces per unit, plus one guest space for every four units for multiple family residential projects. The project provides two stalls per unit for a total of 26 spaces (the total minimum required). The project provides three guest spaces near the driveway entrance and one van-accessible ADA space at the end of the drive aisle. A condition of approval would require a red curb and installation of a "No Parking" sign along Dolores Street to allow future traffic calming improvements.

TJKM Consultants prepared a transportation assessment for the project (see Attachment 4). The assessment includes a trip generation and vehicles miles traveled (VMT) analysis in addition to an on-site circulation and access evaluation. The assessment concludes that the project will generate 88

average daily trips during a typical weekday which is below the VMT screening threshold of 110 daily trips. Therefore, the project does not require a VMT analysis. The project will generate 6 trips in the morning peak hours between 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 7 trips in the evening peak hours of 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. Additionally, the assessment concludes the on-site circulation and site access is adequate for the project.

Landscape

The landscape design creates an inviting presence and includes elements that contribute positively to the neighborhood. The landscape plan provides a hierarchy of plantings with a variety of low to medium water usage trees, shrubs and groundcover consistent with the Design Standards and Guidelines. Two existing tree at the corner of the intersection will be removed and approximately 22 trees of various species would be distributed throughout the development including: red maple, western redbud, desert willow, Catalina ironwood, and dwarf Italian cypress. Shrubs, grasses, and groundcovers include a variety of manzanita, sage, moor grass, and westringia. Most of the proposed plant palette consists of low or medium water usage species consistent with the Water Efficiency Landscape Ordinance (Livermore Municipal Code 13.25).

The proposed street trees will be Red Maple and Catalina Ironwood on East Avenue and Ginkgo Tree on Dolores Street. These trees provide shade and are appropriate as street trees with a broad canopy range between 20-35 feet. Per the Design Standards and Guidelines (section 6.D.1.4.1.b) the street trees will be minimum 24-inch box.

Public Art

Pursuant to Livermore Municipal Code section 12.51, residential development projects are required to provide public art in a manner that benefits the public and contributes to the public's understanding, enjoyment and experience of cultural diversity. Typically, development projects are encouraged to integrate art into the site plan and landscape design. At this time the applicant is proposing to pay the in-lieu fee established by the Municipal Code to satisfy the public art requirement. In-Lieu Fees are used by the Arts Commission to contract, design, and install various forms of art across the city in prominent locations for the broader community to enjoy.

Solid Waste

Each unit will have containers for trash, recycling, and green waste. Each unit has an attached garage where the containers will be stored. The containers will be collected from the internal drive aisle. Livermore Sanitation reviewed and approved the site layout.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The applicant proposes to rent all 13 units in the development. The applicant would be required to enter into an affordable housing agreement that will be recorded on the property with the following conditions of approval.

- a. If the developer owns and rents all units in the project, then one (1) unit shall be reserved for rent to a very low-income (50% of Area Median Income) household at the City's affordable rent limit for

that unit, subject to the City's marketing, leasing and property management requirements for Below Market Rate rentals.

- b. The affordability restrictions will be secured through a regulatory agreement between the City and the developer recorded on the property.
- c. If any of the units in the project are sold or transferred, then the project will be subject to the City's for-sale affordability requirement of 1.95 units. One unit shall be restricted for sale to a low-income (80% of Area Median Income) household at the City's affordable for-sale price and the remaining fractional unit (.95) shall be paid through the in-lieu fee per the Affordable Housing Ordinance

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

Section 15332 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines exempts in-fill development projects in urbanized areas if they meet certain requirements. In-fill projects that are consistent with the General Plan and Zoning requirements and have less than significant environmental impacts are eligible for this exemption. The exemption applies to projects meeting the following conditions.

1. The project is consistent with the applicable general plan designation and all applicable general plan policies as well as with applicable zoning designation and regulations.
2. The proposed development occurs within city limits on a project site of no more than five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses.
3. The project site has no value, as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species.
4. Approval of the project would not result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality
5. The site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services.

The proposed project meets the identified criteria above. It is consistent with the General Plan designation with regard to the use and intensity of the proposed development, compliant with the Development Code, and Design Standards and Guidelines. The development site is located within the City limits on an approximately 0.62-acre site that is surrounded by residential uses and has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species.

The project is not expected to result in any significant effects relating to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality. All public utilities would be modified to serve the proposed development. The City has not identified any constraints that would limit utility service for the project. Emergency responders and solid waste haulers have confirmed that the site is physically suitable for emergency access and provision of public services. All necessary utility services can be accommodated in the project design.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Location Map
2. Development Plans
3. Colors and Materials Board
4. Traffic Assessment
5. Resolution - CEQA
6. Resolution - Planned Development

7. Exhibit A - Planned Development - (PD) 25-001
8. Resolution - Project
9. Exhibit A - Conditions of Approval

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