

Planning, Land Use and Mobility Committee



Case Report: **Home 2 Suites Hotel Project**
 DIR 2016-4787-SPP
 5957 Variel Ave.
 Woodland Hills, CA 91367

PLUM Hearings: April 20, 2017 (Courtesy Presentation)
 May 18, 2017
 June 1, 2017

Site Location: 5957 Variel Avenue
 Warner Center (WC-2035 Specific Plan)
 Woodland Hills, CA 91367

Project: Application for a Permit Plan Compliant extended stay hotel structure with 170 rooms and rising 7-stories—including 1-story of common space and with 1-story of underground parking. Building will have a FAR of 1.97:1

Applicant: Richard A. Mielbye (FPG Development Group, Inc.)

Ad-hoc Committee: Karen Koe, PLUM Committee Chairman
 Marty Lipkin, PLUM Committee Vice-Chair

Overview of Site and Project:

The site is in the Commerce District of the WC 2035 Specific Plan on a corner lot of approximately 51,600 square feet which is currently occupied by a 1-story commercial building in the northeast quadrant of the Warner Center Business Park. To build the 101,492 square foot structure, the developer is estimating they will need to excavate 12,652 cubic yards of earth to accommodate the one floor of underground parking. The Applicant is not seeking any exceptions or variances to the 2035 Warner Center Specific Plan and no incentivized uses are being proposed. Based on the plans filed by the developer, the proposed project appears to fully comply with the WC 2035 Plan, including parking requirements, landscaping and Publically Accessible Open Space. The project will be constructed in a single phase.



Project Description:

The application is to develop a 7-story extended stay/ limited service hotel on the corner of Variel Avenue and Oxnard Street in the Commerce District of Warner Center with a FAR of 1.97:1. Plans show 170 guest rooms, parking for 136 cars, 18 bicycle spaces and ground floor space for a bar, meeting room, exercise facility, pool and coffee shop which will be accessible for visitors as well as hotel guests. The one floor of subterranean parking will have parking lifts to increase parking availability. The hotel does not provide full service for guests, but will have food service for breakfasts for hotel

guests only and will seat up to 49 hotel guests at a time in the dining area. There will be outdoor seating and tables for patrons of the coffee shop. The hotel will have an affiliation with the Home 2 Suites by Hilton division.

Vehicle access to the hotel would be from an ingress/egress cut on Oxnard Street that leads to a motor court and the guest lobby. Entry to the subterranean parking garage would be through a garage portal on the southwest corner of the project which would be shielded from sight from Variel by the structure.



North elevation along Oxnard Street.

In addition, trash pick-up would also be from the rear of the hotel near the southwest corner, but shielded from view by the structure from both Variel and Oxnard.

The site plans indicate that there will be 7,974 square feet of Publicly Accessible Open Space when the project is completed.

WC 2035 Specific Plan Conformance:

The Applicant is not asking for any variances or exemptions from the Specific Plan and no extra density bonuses are being sought. Based on the submitted plans and information received in two presentations from the developer, the project appears to conform to the requirements of the WC 2035 Plan, but does include more parking spaces than the Plan requires. The Specific Plan requires 82 parking stalls for staff and guests, but the Applicant is incorporating a total of 94 parking spaces into his plan: 41 surface parking and 53 underground parking spaces. He is also pre-wiring electrical and adding any needed structural elements to install optional lifts for cars in the subterranean parking if needed in the future to achieve a grand total of 136 parking spaces.

Architectural Design and Materials

The building is a contemporary design that “floats” the upper 6 guest floors above a smaller ground floor base with column elements supporting key points of the building mass. The building features articulation on most sides to break up the mass and add visual interest on the north, south and west elevations. The east elevation has a curved façade with a parapet overhang and six balconies on the northeast corner.

As presented in the developer’s plans, exterior building materials will include three (3) shades of smooth stucco (white/medium grey/dark grey), areas of dark grey/black ribbed metal panels, black metal panels, polished metal, solar control glass, and concrete. Initial plans included areas of a simulated wood paneling, but after discussion with the PLUM Committee, the decision was made to replace that material.



Northwest corner view showing Oxnard and parking entry/lobby on west elevation.

The west elevation will have a porte cochere extending over the guest entry into the lobby. The subterranean garage will have an entry on the south side of the building site.

Landscaping and Exterior Lighting

The site has a total of 37 existing trees—none of which are protected species. The developer proposes to remove 11 existing trees and plant replacement specimens for a total of 48 trees—a net increase of 11 trees. The landscape plan calls for London Plane Trees, Paperbark, Liquid Amber and a few Eucalyptus. The Urban Design Studio reviewed the initial landscape plans and requested that four (4) additional trees be added to the site. The revised development plans include those additional trees.

The north (Oxnard) and east (Variel) setbacks will have ground cover of Dymondia and Bunchberry, and planting beds along the structure will have a variety of drought-tolerant shrubs and plants. The east and south facades will primarily have hardscape, walks and trees.

No lighting plan has been submitted at this time and will be required to meet the requirements of the WC 2035 Plan before Planning can issue approval.



View from northeast corner of Variel and Oxnard showing roof parapet overhang and six guest balconies.

Signage

The developer has not submitted a final signage proposal which will be needed to meet the signage requirements of the WC 2035 plan. However, the artist renderings of the proposed project show two signs—one on the top of the large ribbed metal panel on the northwest corner of the structure, and one near the top of the southeast corner

facing Variel. A formal signage request and plans will need to be submitted to Planning for approval.

Analysis and Assessment

During the Applicant's initial presentation to the PLUM Committee (April 20, 2017), the project was generally well received. However,



West façade showing main guest entry, porte cochere, and large dark grey ribbed metal architectural enhancement (left).

PLUM Committee members did point out several areas of concern and requested that at developer address them for the subsequent presentation(s). Those issues were:

1. A major entry column at the northeast corner of the structure was indicated as a white V-shaped pillar supporting the main bulk of the building. Committee comments were that it did not seem to marry with the architectural design of the structure and seemed out-of-place. Additionally, it was noted that since this corner of the property is a key activity corner within the WC 2035 Plan, there is an opportunity for the architect to make a greater architectural statement or actually turn the entry support column into an art form due to its location in a high visibility location.
 - A revised concept for the support column was presented at the May 18 hearing that showed the column as a linear post integrated into the east façade. Some PLUM members felt that the solution diminished an important focal point for the project and Warner Center and requested that the architect consider a different direction and aesthetic application. The Applicant presented two alternative designs for both the column and the front panels near two entry on June 1, 2017 and the Committee selected a “lighted slat” design as its preference.

2. Concern that the initial material plans showed a rough stucco texture for large areas of the facade that some felt was not compatible with proposed adjacent materials.
 - Architect revised finish to a “Smooth Stucco” to be more compatible with other materials.
3. Proposed “wood material” adjacent to stucco at several entry locations on the ground floor was felt to be inconsistent with overall design and might create undesirable transition details.
 - Architect revised elevations by removing “wood material” panels and adding metal trellis areas for vine material to create a “living wall” panel near entry areas. PLUM comments indicated that the “living wall” areas seemed “out-of-place” with the design and suggested that a different architectural solution would be preferred—possibly the use of the rippled metal panel materials on large areas of the building façade with an artistic lighting treatment so that it highlighted the different configuration with texture and possibly patterns. It was suggested that the developer try to create something that would provide “visual interest” to pedestrians on Variel and serve as an artistic element. Architect presented two revised versions at the June 1 PLUM meeting and a “lighted slat” version was chosen.
4. Requested clarification of specific areas and revised calculations of Publicly Accessible Open Space (P.A.O.S.) as required in WC 2035 Plan.
 - Developer provided revised calculations for open space in updated table in resubmitted plans. (Sheet A-6).
5. Concerns regarding pedestrian access to the site from adjoining property (required by WC 2035 Plan) on west side.
 - A delineated pedestrian access easement under the porte cochere entry of the motor court and leading into the lobby entrance was proposed by the developer which seemed to fulfill the Committee’s request. The change is incorporated into the revised plans and is shown on page A-9.
6. Concerns regarding visibility and access of receiving dock and trash area which were originally positioned at the southeast corner of the structure and would have required access from Variel for trucks unloading freight and picking up dumpsters. Also expressed was the need for additional curb cuts on Variel for vehicle access to this area.
 - Developer and architect reconsidered the plan and redesigned access to the loading dock and trash pick-up area. Those areas have now been removed from the Variel side of

the building and relocated to the interior of the site. New configuration is incorporated into revised plans (Sheet A-9).

- Back-of-house facilities are no longer visible from Variel.
- Building elevation along Variel hides areas and all activity.
- Delivery trucks and trash pick-up access those areas through the motor court near the entry to the subterranean parking entry.

With those major concerns addressed and the proposed changes incorporated into the developer's final plans as presented to the PLUM Committee on June 1, 2017, the Committee is of the opinion that the project fulfills the requirements of the Specific Plan and can be judged an asset to the future of Warner Center and Woodland Hills.

Proposed PLUM Motion:

As pertaining to Case DIR-2016-4787-SPP, having held three public hearings for the application filed by FPG Development Group, Inc. to build a 7-story Home 2 Suites Hotel by Hilton, with 170 guest rooms in a 101,492 square foot structure that also incorporates one level of subterranean parking at 5957 Variel Ave. in the Commerce District of Warner Center, Woodland Hills, CA 91367, the Planning, Land Use and Mobility Committee hereby finds that:

WHEREAS, the Applicant has designed and submitted a proposed extended-stay hotel project that substantially complies with the applicable regulations, findings, standards, and provisions of the Warner Center 2035 Plan; and,

WHEREAS, the project is not requesting any exceptions, variances or density bonuses; and,

WHEREAS, the developer has addressed the issues raised by the PLUM Committee and has incorporated those changes into his revised development plans; and,

WHEREAS, the Applicant has presented parking and landscaping plans that conform to, or exceed the WC2035 Plan and is pre-wiring for future installation of car lifts; and,

WHEREAS, the Applicant has provided for pedestrian mobility through the western motor court to the adjacent property;

THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that the Planning, Land Use and Mobility Committee, for the findings and conditions stated herein, finds that the submitted application and plans by FPG Development Group, Inc. for the proposed project at 5957 Variel Ave., receive the support of the Board of the Woodland Hills-Warner Center Neighborhood Council for the requested actions contingent upon the following conditions:

Conditions

- 1.) All current and future property owner(s) accept responsibility to provide Publicly Accessible Open Space and agree to make reasonable accommodations to the project to facilitate the future integration of pedestrian access between the project and the adjacent properties .
- 2.) All plans presented on June 14, 2017 at the Board Meeting of the Woodland Hills – Warner Center Neighborhood Council (WHWCNC) shall be dated as such and re-submitted to Planning as an (updated) project application submittal.
- 3.) The applicant will not submit any significant, further updated plans without presenting them to the WHWCNC for support.
- 4.) Additionally, all conditions herein shall be printed on one of the Project Summary pages as a commitment to and acceptance of these conditions.
- 5.) The Applicant will submit his proposed lighting plans and signage plans to the Neighborhood Council and to Planning when specifics have been determined at a time before construction begins on the proposed project,

The Planning, Land Use and Mobility Committee recommends that the Board of the Woodland Hills-Warner Center Neighborhood Council advise the City of Los Angeles Planning Department and Council District 3 Councilmember Bob Blumenfield of its findings, and its subsequent supporting recommendation to approve this application as presented on June 1, 2017.

Motion: Karen Koe / Marty Lipkin
Second: Don Patterson

Vote: Aye Nay Abstain Recused
 7 0 0 1

(Motion carries)