



Planning, Land Use and Mobility Committee

Case Report: **DIR 2018-3324-SPP**
 6622 -6636 N. Variel Ave.
 6617-6635 N. Independence
 Woodland Hills, CA 91367



***Original (on top left, Second (on top right) Corner elevation at Variel and Kittridge.
Latest 11-1-2018 elevation below them showing changes mid-block on Kittridge.***

WHWCNC First: August 16, 2018
PLUM Meetings: Second: October 4, 2018
 Third: November 1, 2018
 Fourth: December 6, 2018

Site Location: Warner Center (WC-2035 Specific Plan, North Village District)
6622-6636 N. Variel Avenue and
6617 6635 N. Independence Avenue
Woodland Hills, CA 91367

Project: The Applicant is proposing the construction of a new, 7-story, maximum 90 feet in height multi-family residential building with 395 apartment units and approximately 436,058 square feet of floor area ("Proposed Project"). The apartment units will be located on the ground floor of the Proposed Project, along the Subject Property's Variel Avenue, Kittridge Street and Independence Avenue frontages, as well as those located on the 2nd through 7th floors. Vehicular parking will be provided within a structured parking garage surrounded by residential and non-residential uses. A minimum of 509 parking spaces (1.29 ratio to apartments) will be provided in the parking garage to serve all uses contained on-site. The Proposed Project will provide 174 long-term bicycle spaces and 18 short-term bicycle spaces, for a total of 192 bicycle parking spaces, located throughout the ground floor level.

The Proposed Project will provide a total of 43,400 square feet of combined publicly accessible, private and common open space areas, including both passive and active recreational spaces, such as private balconies, a pool, resident lounges, and club room, and sky decks. These amenities and features will benefit the future residents' health and well-being and will serve to foster community amongst the residents. The Proposed Project has been designed to meet the requirements of the WC 2035.

Applicant: Kathy Binford (Hanover R.S. Limited Partnership, Houston, TX)
Architecture by: TCA Architects
Landscaping by: GWH Landscape Architects
Ad-hoc Committee: August Steurer, PLUM Committee Member

Overview of Site and Project:

The site is in the North Village District of the WC 2035 Specific Plan on a "L"-shaped level parcel of approximately 125,357 square feet (2.88 acres). The project has approximately 225 linear feet of frontage along the east side of Variel Ave. to the corner with Kittridge St. where it has 650 linear feet of frontage on the south side to the corner at Independence Avenue where it has 285 linear feet of frontage on the west side of the street. The proposed project has existing, proposed or under construction multi-family projects to the north, south, east and west. The project will be constructed in a single phase.



Original (on the top left) and Second (on the top right) Corner Elevation Rendering (Independence and Kittridge). Below them is the Latest elevation showing the current version of the upper part. The base has again been modified as depicted further down.

Project Description:

In addition to apartments on Floors 2-7 there will be apartments on the ground floor facing Variel, Kittridge and Independence incorporating porches with direct access to the street, which makes them permitted by the WC2035 Plan on an active frontage street. Vehicular parking is in a structured garage with egress/ingress from the north on Kittridge and the south via shared 24-ft driveway with the project to the south that is currently under construction. The project will have a combined 192 short- and long-term bicycle parking spaces. Pedestrian access is provided at the Variel-Kittridge corner from the plaza and two secondary lobbies located mid-block on Kittridge and Independence.

At the Variel/Kittridge corner is a plaza with access to the 2-story amenity space. In the western half of the project is the landscaped 4,400 SF western courtyard. The eastern part of the project has a larger landscaped, 7,400 SF courtyard with a pool, seating, cabanas and restrooms. Both courtyards are open to the sky. Two sky decks (East and West) on the Kittridge frontage will have a total of 1,300 SF of landscaped and paved outdoor dining and barbeque areas. The project claims these areas help to break up the massing.

The project claims to have 18,804 SF of publicly accessible open space to meet the 15% of site area requirement of the WC2035 Plan. PAOS areas include the plaza, and west courtyard as well as the set-back yard areas along Variel, Kittridge and Independence plus the 8-foot easement required along Variel. The PAOS is to feature a minimum of 38 seats, one focal point located in the plaza and about 9,471 SF on landscaping. The project also uses a low-slope roof with solar reflectance greater than 78 under option 1 in the WC2035 Plan.



Current Southwest (left) and Southeast (right) Elevations



Second (on the left) and Latest (on the right) Elevation Rendering along Kittridge.

Ordinance, Specific Plan or Municipal Code Conformance:

The Applicant is not asking for any variances or exemptions from the Specific Plan and no extra density bonuses are being sought. No street dedications are currently required. Based on the submitted plans and information received from the developer, the project appears to conform to

the requirements of the WC 2035 Plan, but does include 15% more (61) parking spaces than the minimum that the Plan requires. Total FAR permitted under WC2035 is 4.50:1 and the project has a FAR of 3.50:1. There is no minimum non-residential FAR required. There is an activity node at Variel and Kittridge. Within 150 feet of the center of the intersecting streets, the project has no residential uses and the use meets the minimum 25-foot depth requirement with minimum of 75% transparency of the façade between 30 and 84 inches from the ground.

The Kittridge frontage is designated as active street frontage, which normally does not allow residential uses. However, there is an exception for residential uses that have street facing stoops or porches with direct access to the street for each residential unit.



Original (@ left), 2nd (middle) and Latest (@ right) Midblock Rendering along Kittridge.



Renderings of Prior Stoop Version (left) and the First New Version (right) along Kittridge.

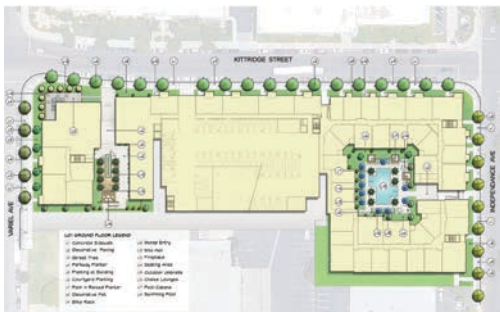


Rendering Second New Version along Kittridge.

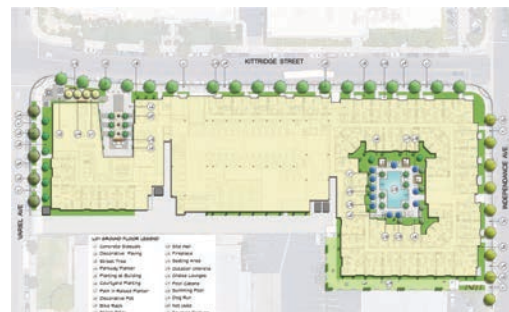
Architectural Design and Materials

The building is a contemporary design that features articulation on most sides to break up the mass and add visual interest on the north, east and west elevations. The project uses a variety of building materials to break up building mass and provide visual interest. Lobbies are designed with storefront window systems with street level entrances. The parking structure has colored 3 dimensional panels and vegetation to break up the appearance of the structure for the benefit of residents in the apartments across the driveway. As presented in the developer's plans, exterior building materials will be stucco, perforated metal and metal railings, veneer tile, glass and other materials.

Landscaping



Original Site plan and general Landscaping



Latest(2nd) Site plan and general Landscaping

The original application plans do not list existing trees, but does propose 99 trees as required (1 per 4 units). Those plans claimed to landscape 56% of the publicly accessible open space. Street frontages will have landscape buffers. There are small amounts of landscaping on the southern edges of the project including a dog run.

Exterior Lighting and Security

Site lighting for points of entry into the project, pedestrian walkways and outdoor common open space will include mounted and pole-mounted light focused downward and shielded to reduce glare. 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.

Signage

No signage is included in the application.

Analysis and Assessment

During the Applicant's initial presentation to the PLUM Committee (August 16th), the project was generally not well received.

- On August 16th, concern was expressed that more was needed at the street level to enhance public pedestrian appeal such as the possibility of shops or a coffee shop. The developer is not convinced that there is enough traffic to support those shops at this time.



First Southern Elevation Revision (left) and previous revision (right) of Parking Structure



Latest design with color option 1 (on the left) color option 2 (on the right).



First Eastern Elevation (on the left) and Firsts Western Elevation (on the right).

- One of the complaints (August 16th), was the covered “tunnel” to the western courtyard. At the second presentation (October 4th), the project has been redesigned to bring the western courtyard out to the street. While the western corner plaza has been slightly reduced, the plaza is subsequently larger overall with the addition of the courtyard.

At the second meeting (October 4th) the new west courtyard was well received with the exception of the method of gating. At the third meeting (November 1st) the revised renderings show a reduction in the overhead structure to reduce the sense of the gateways to pedestrians.

- Another general complaint (August 16th), was that the variation and articulation of the massing was not strong enough. The three “languages” of the style were not readily apparent.

The project has increased the articulation and made more significant changes to the styling to break up the massing along the street frontages. The Kittridge frontage is very long and there was a greater sense of different sections along this frontage. The level of detail at the ground level did not seem to rise to the level as present in the upper floors as depicted in the renderings provided.

In the second presentation (October 4th) the massing was broken up with the inclusion of bringing the courtyard to the street and changes to the elevations. The committee suggested further refinement of the Kittridge frontage. It sought return of connection between the upper floors and 2-story base. Also suggested was more variety and detail of porches and stoops to provide a better pedestrian experience.



Original (on the left) and 2nd (on the right) Courtyard Elevation Rendering along Kittridge.



Latest Courtyard Gates 3-D design open (on the left) and closed (on the right).

In the third presentation (November 1st) the project addressed comments of the committee by further detailing the ground-level unit entrances and modifying the articulation for greater variety.

- The Kittridge-Independence Corner was considered to lack prominence (August 16th).

At the second presentation (October 4th), the project architecture was modified and more color added to make the corner more prominent and stronger. However the committee was not satisfied with the architecture style of the corner base.

At the third presentation (November 1st), the corner styling and massing became more unified and improved.

At the fourth presentation (December 6th), the base of the corner was modified to improve the stoop using art patterns from other stoops.



Latest Independence Ave intersection design for better privacy

- Initially, every member of the committee complained about the treatment of the parking structure with suggestions that it needed embellishment.

At the second presentation (October 4th), vertical elements via landscaping and architectural elements (screening panels) were added to break up the long horizontal lines of the ramped floors. Committee comments suggested further refinement of the repetitive panels for more variety.

At the third presentation (November 1st) the project plans showed better variety to the panels. Taller vegetation, either trees or vining, was requested between panels to further shade the structure. The committee was still not overly satisfied.

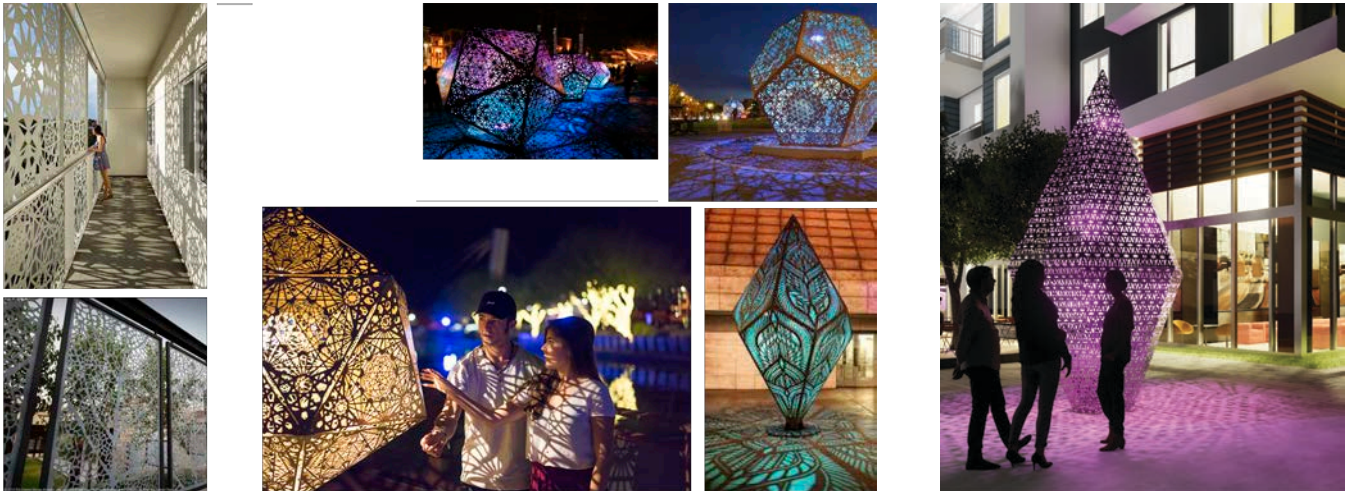
In addition to retaining the landscaping, the fourth presentation (December 6th) offered a new design with one large frame surrounding numerous 3-dimensional crystalline objects with 2 options of colored panels. The committee felt the new offering was not satisfactory and that the prior design would be better if it morphed into trapezoidal shapes that related to the artwork on the front part of the project. The applicant agreed to present a refined version for the Board.

- In response to committee comments (August 16th) that the roof lines were too flat or monotonous, at the second presentation (October 4th) breaks in the façade and greater depth of articulation for the massing segments mitigated somewhat the flatness appearance from street level. A residential unit was also eliminated to provide a rooftop patio and further articulate the roofline.

In the third presentation (November 1st) the Kittridge façade has more style variety yet simpler and cleaner at the same time. At the fourth presentation (December 6th), only the ground level stoops were modified.

- The third presentation (November 1st) gave increased detailing of the stoops along Kittridge in response to the committee’s suggestions that they offer variety and detailing of interest to pedestrians. The committee expressed reservations that the design offered hiding places for transients. The latest design (December 6th) offers semi-transparent grills, which riff on the art designs of the plaza artwork and gates. The applicant agreed that low gates at the foot of the steps would help.

- At the latest presentation (December 6th), in response to committee requests for further information on the plaza art, examples of art known as HYBYCOZO. The artwork is 3-dimensional constructed of metal panels with complex patterns cutout and lit with light. The designs were also carried onto the gateway design. The PLUM Committee received the concept very well and complimented the applicant on the choice of concept.



An example of the type of Plaza Art Piece to be commissioned (shown on the right)

- Concern was expressed (August 16th) about the open railing on the balconies. Although some effort (October 4th) was made to add colored panels to balconies at the activity node and Kittridge facades, the committee did not love them. In the previous presentation (November 1st) the colored panels were removed returning to a cleaner appearance and the balconies have not changed since then.