

Planning, Land Use and Mobility Committee



“The District at Warner Center” Mixed Use Residential/Hotel/Commercial *Version III*

**Case Report: 6100 Canoga Avenue, Woodland Hills, CA 91367
Downtown District, Warner Center 2035 Plan
DIR-2020-5379-SPP-VHCA**

PLUM Presentations: June 4, 2020 (Courtesy presentation)
December 3, 2020- First Presentation
August 5, 2021- Second (revised) presentation (virtual)
September 30, 2021- Third (additional rev.) presentation (virtual)

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PLUM Case Leaders: Sean McCarthy, Marty Lipkin



Rev-2 project site plan in Downtown District of WC 2035 Specific Plan.

Project Summary:

The proposed project is a Master-Planned, mixed-use development slated for an 8.88 acre site totaling 383,486 square feet in the Downtown District of Warner Center, and will occupy the former site of the giant electronics retailer Fry's.

Their revised plans are for two very large 7-story mixed-use/residential structures with two attached, wrapped, 8-level parking garages, and with two relatively slim, 10-story high rises fronting Canoga. There will be 852 market rate dwelling units, which includes 316 "Work/Live" units (50% of the required SF for non-residential use requirements.) The two apartment/garage structures with a total of 1,381 parking spaces are ringed by the PAOS space/fire lane corridor

which are accessible from either of the two entrances just off Canoga. A PAOS greenery area named Icon Park fronts the tower to the south while the north tower has a small “bodega” at ground level. The plans also call for a third structure—a 204-room, 12-story hotel with subterranean parking—to front Canoga Avenue. The applicant states that there will be no low income residential or workforce housing included in the proposed project because it is not required by the 2035 WC Specific Plan.

The Applicant proposes to build this master planned development in three phases: the northern residential/garage structure would be Phase 1, the southern residential/garage structure would be Phase 2, and the Hotel would be the third and final Phase. The entire project proposes 1,154,178 SF of total floor area. Total residential parking upon completion will be 1,381 vehicle spaces. Also, 407 bike spaces have been provided.

Half (50%) of the commercial space required in the 2035 WC Plan is to be met by the proposed 852 “Work/Live” units. The hotel and a small bodega-type grocery/convenience store in the ground floor of the northern tower provide the other half of the required commercial space. The Applicant notes that the size of the hotel may be reduced depending on the market, but that required commercial space will be preserved.



North tower and hotel front on Canoga. A bodega will be housed in the north tower. The south tower is recessed from Canoga to provide room for a PAOS park.

According to plans provided, the Applicant claims there will be 127,235 SF of Open Space in the project. However, much of the PAOS is comprised of the EVA Lane running along the perimeters of the project. LA Fire Department requirements necessitated the site plan, structure designs and placements to be changed from the initial plans. According to the Applicant, there will be an open “park” area at the southwest corner of the property. The perimeter PAOS/EVA lane will feature some seating and planting areas as well as additional fitness and garden area

insets off the main PAOS/EVA corridor. The “Live/Work” units are planned to front the PAOS to offer access to the businesses they are supposed to house.

Site Plan Overview:

The revised proposed project covers virtually the entire parcel with structures with a park/green space left at the southwest corner, and the PAOS/EVA encircling the perimeter. There is a narrow open space/air shaft between the north residential and south residential sections. Each residential building has an open courtyard/pool/lounge area at the lowest level.

The parking garages are faced with live/work and special facilities at the ground and second levels, and apartments hide the garage parking from view from stories 3-7. The proposed site plan indicates two “connectivity points”—one that is supposed to link up with the Vela on Ox providing walk-through connectivity to Oxnard on the south, and a site on the north perimeter that has no natural connectivity access and is blocked off by a concrete wall running all along the northern perimeter. The Applicant has said that he is in the process of negotiating a passageway through the wall so that pedestrians will have access to Oxnard, the huge WC blocks will be shortened and the connectivity requirements of the 2035 Specific Plan can be fulfilled.

The former Fry’s Electronics site faces Canoga Avenue which provides the property with its only vehicle access points. The revised site plan indicates a new, 2-way circular street/drive around the hotel with two entry/exit ramps connecting to Canoga and providing the access points to all parking on the property. One issue is there is no parking area for access to the bodega market in the north high-rise. Parking for the hotel will be valet and no external parking areas are indicated on the site plan maps.

The Usable Open Space (PAOS not within required setbacks) totals 85,609 SF. The total usable open space provided in the project is 127,235 SF. The Specific Plan required total open space is 91,575 SF.

There are dog/pet relief areas now included in the revised plans.

Building Specifics:

Phase I: Building #2—Northern Area: Mixed Use / Residential:

- 445-residential units
- 7-stories with 10-story high rise
- Separate parking facility (8 levels). Two levels are wrapped by Live/Work units and levels 3-7 wrapped by apartments.
- Small market/convenience store located in growing floor of tower facing Canoga (No parking area for market)
- Garden/social area on part of the top level of garage.
- 716 Parking spaces

Phase II: Buildings #1: Southern Area: Mixed Use / Residential:

- 7 stories, mixed-use with a 10-story high rise.

- 407 apartment and Work/Live units
- Separate parking facility (8 levels). Two levels are wrapped by Live/Work units and levels 3-7 wrapped by apartments.
- Garden/social area on part of the top level of garage.
- 673 parking spaces

Phase III: Building #3: Hotel

- 160,341 SF, 12-stories
- 204 rooms
- 122 parking spaces (93 required)—All Valet
- Reception lobby, bar, bistro, restaurant, pool & spa, fitness room and meeting rooms.

Hotel Phase:

As previously noted the proposed hotel structure is situated as the centerpiece of the project and occupies the largest stretch of the property along Canoga Avenue.



The latest design version of the hotel is slightly forward of the south residential tower on right

The hotel will rise 12 stories, have only valet parking, and will have a pool deck, spa, fitness club and terrace seating on the third floor deck over the porte-cochere entry.

In all of its design iterations, there have been only minimal changes to the hotel design and due to its key WC location and lack of iconic architecture have been consistently singled out as a major “missed opportunity” for the hotel and for Warner Center.

Previous Project Submissions and PLUM Response

December 3, 2020: First Formal Presentation



Following an initial “Courtesy presentation” of their thinking, the Applicant submitted a project plan that showed a proposal of the 2 residential buildings and a hotel with a central PAOS/EVA running through the core of the site. Buildings were proposed to abut the perimeters of the property, and access to the PAOS was through a ground-level passageway under the hotel.

The ground level of the PAOS was ringed with the Work/Live units with ground floor “storefronts.” Overall, the PLUM Committee had a negative response to many aspects of the presentation including the massing, the lack of true green PAOS, the blandness of the architecture, lack of required connectivity, ease of parking and the difficulty accessing the PAOS and Work/Live stores for the general public.

The Committee was especially critical of the massiveness and “bulk” of the entire project and requested that the key issues of connectivity and pedestrian access to other streets required in the WC 2035 Specific Plan be more closely adhered to. The PLUM Committee asked the developer and architects to re-think the entire project.

Modified plans/illustrations for project: (No Presentation date.)

Following the comments from the PLUM Committee, the Applicant went back to the drawing board and the exterior architecture and embellishments were re-thought. The Architects submitted the renderings to the PLUM Case Leaders for the project and were in the process of scheduling another presentation. However, the initial site plan remained the same, and at this



point, the LA Fire Department reviewed the site plan, its fire access and other safety issues, and determined that the submitted site plan did not meet the City's access and fire safety codes. The applicant was instructed to change the site plan and create greater EVA access to all of the buildings and re-think placement of some of the structures. The Applicant stated that they had to re-think the entire project.

August 5, 2021- Second (revised) presentation



Developer presented new renderings and elevations for project with several major changes from the initial concept. The entire inner residential section was now “ringed” by an EVA/PAOS that allows fire access from additional angles. The south tower was set back from Canoga Ave. to create space for a larger greenery area that was labeled as a public park. Access to the PAOS and the Work/Live units was now accessible from two openings from Canoga. Two corridors for connectivity were indicated for the north and south, although both were blocked by existing walls. And the residential/garage buildings are now a wrap. In addition, roof decks were added to the two parking structures and the auto entry was now behind the hotel. Questions from the



public asked if Affordable housing was available (No), if the park could be enlarged or if a second park could be placed in the rear of the project, and questions if another hotel is needed in Warner Center. The overall reaction by the PLUM Committee was slightly more positive than for the initial concept presentation, but was still not enthusiastic about the project. The EVA and PAOS circling the entire project was brought up as the major highlight. There were positive comments about the simplified auto entry and exit, and access to parking.

However, the question of the need—or the prospects for success—for another hotel in Warner Center was brought up several times. Several members said they were very disappointed in what was presented for such a crucial location in Warner Center’s core, and many remarked that the architecture was “vanilla and uninspired,” and that any new hotel needs to be far more “dynamic and iconic” if it is expected to survive in this and future markets. They felt that few would be attracted to a project that had no true “iconic” features. Also mentioned was that all the buildings and massing were the same and that using “Work/Live” units to meet 50% of the required commercial area was a cheat since most W/L units in Warner Center are being used as just residences and that these W/L units would fail to attract the kinds of shops and local-serving businesses that Warner Center needs to exist and balance the live/work goals of the 2035 Specific Plan.

Third Presentation Analysis:

The Case Leaders on this project have had the opportunity to parse and analyze the changes, additions and deletions to the submitted elevations and renderings and plans for the 9-30-21 presentation of this project to the full WHWCNC PLUM Committee and the general public.

For the most part, the submitted “The District” project (R-3) fulfills the requirements of the 2035 Warner Center Specific Plan which is part of City municipal law. It should be noted that there are a number of community and City issues that were not addressed at the time the Specific Plan went into effect, or were addressed and approved in the state-required environmental report. The two most discussed issues are Affordable Housing and increased vehicular traffic. The 2035 Plan

was created well before the issue(s) of Affordable Housing arose, and as such, developers cannot be legally mandated to incorporate that type of housing in their projects. As for the issues of unlimited growth and increased vehicular traffic, both were analyzed in the Environmental Impact Report created for the 2035 Specific Plan, and caps were placed on the number of residences that can be built until 2035 and on the amount of traffic generated by new apartments. This project does not exceed those limits.

As far as the “Plusses” of this revised plan, the creation of “Icon Park” at the southwest corner of the site and the widening and “greening” of the EVA/PAOS that circles the residential/garage structures are significant additions and changes.

The “flying buttresses” along the top of the south tower section may be the only iconic architectural embellishment to the entire project, and must be retained/ preserved at all costs because in the past, many of the architectural touches on other projects have been deleted in the final construction phase without getting any form of a public hearing.

The “attempt” at creating two pedestrian access points through adjoining properties should be applauded because that upholds one of the primary tenants of the 2035 Plan, but the developer must be prompted by the City to work with the two adjacent property owners to assure that the pedestrian access requirement actually is fulfilled. It should be noted that because this is a Master-Plan community over 5 acres, they are required by the Specific Plan to create pedestrian pathways and connectivity through/to an adjoining property.



The view of the north building looking south shows few if any real break-ups to the roofline of the structure and monotony and bulk to the project



The south side of the complex is equally unattractive and heavy, although the roofline seems to indicate a few more parapets and extensions than the north building.

Considering the negative aspects of this project, and those things that should be looked at more carefully or reconsidered, the overall massing and vanilla architecture has to be a paramount

concern—especially for a complex that is virtually at the heart of the entire Warner Center area. The massing and bulky forms of the buildings are overweight and make the entire complex look like a Soviet-era industrial housing complex.

From its inception—and through every version, the architecture of this project has bordered on the dull, the mundane and the uninspired—despite numerous pleas to make some aspect of this plan truly iconic. For this version, the only semi-iconic architectural aspect is the addition of the “flying buttresses” atop the south tower. It is a start, but not that much of one—especially since there is no guarantee that the developer will actually construct those “flying buttresses” and not delete them once it goes through Planning and claim a “cost hardship.”

Next, there seems little to draw actual business-type endeavors into the Work/Live units. The Work/Live idea was to draw small businesses and community-serving shops into a complex that is required to have almost ½ of its square footage devoted to supplying commercial space that is intended to create jobs and businesses for Warner Center. Frankly, the Work/Live idea has been a massive failure in Warner Center as the vast number of these Work/Live units are simply being used as apartments without adding to the needed commercial endeavors envisioned for Warner Center. In the case of this project, the Work/Live units represent 50% of the required commercial footage for this WC District, and failing to mandate that only real businesses can rent these units puts the entire concept of the 2035 Plan at risk. This is especially important in considering this particular project since the hotel structure is being portrayed as a major commercial use that will bring a significant number of jobs in to the area. The hotel does not appear that it will be a major source of employment generation for Warner Center—especially in the Downtown District which was intended to be a “jobs rich area.”

It is important to note that there does not appear to any consideration to families or single parents living with children. The majority of the dwelling units are Studio, One Bedroom and Live/Work which are not really conducive to raising a family. Nor are there any facilities and areas that are specifically child-friendly like children’s play areas or features like sand boxes, teeter-totters, swings, etc.

Additionally, the one truly commercial site in the project—the small bodega—does not have any convenient parking or any areas for dropping off or picking up anyone needing to stop in there.

Another sadly missing element is an effort to incorporate solar roofs into the project. Not only are the roofs of almost every building virtually flat and an ideal perch for solar panels, but the top floor of each parking structure should have an array of solar panels to collect energy and take some of the strain off of almost-maxed-out electrical grids.

While they are not mandated in the 2035 Specific Plan, affordable housing units and workforce housing units should get stronger consideration. Both are discussed in section 5.3.5 of the 2035 Plan that states "...they should be considered by the City, as guidance rather than as requirements, in approving, at the City's full discretion, any development agreement (according to California Government Code Section 65864 et seq.) proposed in conjunction with a Project." This is important because there is a preponderance of Market-Rate units either already built, approved,

or proposed in Warner Center, yet only one master-planned project with designated residential spaces for these two housing types of badly needed units.

As stated earlier, the developer's attempt to create two pedestrian connectivity points should be applauded. But just creating "access points" that end at a brick wall or fence does not fulfill the requirements of the 2035 Plan. Providing pedestrian connectivity *through* the project to the north, and south to properties fronting Oxnard and Erwin is a paramount mission for every developer. Not completing that connectivity is defeating the 2035 WC Plan's prime goals of breaking up the large city blocks into more walkable ones. As stated in the WC 2035 Plan, "the intent of Section 5.3.3.3 is to establish procedures for Master Planned Projects to ensure that the pedestrian and walkability goals of the Plan are preserved and enhanced." This developer should/must gather the necessary voice of the City and the legal community to see that connectivity is achieved.

PLUM MOTION

As pertaining to Case DIR-2020-5379-SPP-VHCA at 6100 Canoga Avenue, Woodland Hills, CA 91367, after having held four (4) live or virtual electronic public meetings for the application filed by Kaplan Companies (Houston Texas), for an 8.88 acre phased Master Planned mixed-use development project in the Downtown District of the Warner Center Plan that is in compliance with the Warner Center 2035 Specific Plan and will feature residential units (316 market rate apartments and 536 Work/Live spaces) providing 1,154,178 SF of total floor area in two apartment/garage structures, plus a 12-story hotel building fronting Canoga Ave., the WHWCNC Planning, Land Use and Mobility Committee hereby finds that:

WHEREAS, the proposed Master Plan adheres to all of the requirements of the Downtown District of the 2035 Warner Center Specific Plan without requesting variances or exemptions; and,

WHEREAS, the proposed Master Plan provides the required balance proportions between commercial space and residential space; and,

WHEREAS, the development plan provides for 85,106 SF of *usable* Publicly Available Open Space (PAOS) which includes a 4,300 SF public park fronting Canoga Ave., and a total of 127,235 SF of PAOS which is 149% of the required amount; and,

WHEREAS, a total of 1,381 vehicle parking spaces and 407 bicycle spaces are provided in the Master Plan which exceed the minimum required totals for this mixed-use Master Planned development; and,

WHEREAS all 54 existing trees on the site will be removed and replaced with a total of 243 newly planted *shade producing trees* (not including additional palm trees around the hotel) in the PAOS, parkettes and "club garden" areas; and,

WHEREAS since the proposed development will create a significant "heat island" in the Downtown District, the Applicant has agreed to explore the options of using Cool-Crete surfaces throughout the open spaces of the project, solar panels on the roofs of the garages, and cool roof surfaces on the other structures; and,

WHEREAS the development plans call for the creation of a private, 2-way road around the hotel that will serve as the ingress/egress for all vehicles to the site and which the Applicant has agreed to make a No Parking thoroughfare; and,

WHEREAS the Applicant has added "fins," "buttresses" and other permanent architectural elements and embellishments to all three "tower" structures fronting Canoga Ave. and additional roofline modifications along the north and south elevations of the garages/apartments in an effort to create a more iconic project as requested by the Neighborhood Council; and,

WHEREAS the Applicant has stated that he has reached out to the property owners of existing structures on the south, north and east to negotiate open access pathways (from 6 AM-10 PM) to surrounding streets in

order to break up the giant WC block(s) and create true connectivity through WC as mandated in the 2035 Specific Plan; and,

WHEREAS the Applicant has stated that land slated for the phases not undergoing construction or serving as a staging site for current construction equipment/materials, will not be used as temporary parking or storage sites, and that those sites will be graded, landscaped and open to the public until new construction is about to begin.

Therefore, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that the Planning Land Use and Mobility Committee and the full Board of the Woodland Hills-Warner Center Neighborhood Council, for the findings and conditions stated herein, finds that application and plans submitted by Kaplan Companies, its affiliated architects, planners and partners receive the support of the Board of the Woodland Hills-Warner Center Neighborhood Council (WHWCNC) for their requested actions contingent upon the following conditions:

Conditions

1. The work/live units represent approximately 50% of the required commercial use for this project. As such, the WHWCNC believes the majority of those units need to be located adjacent to the other commercial uses – the Bodega, Hotel Lobby and leasing offices-- to benefit from the pedestrian foot traffic that would activate these work/live “storefronts” and enable their rental and commercial success.

Subsequently, creating an interesting commercial zone adjacent to the new “park” open space along Canoga Avenue and adjacent to the Hotel Lobby and its possible cafes, bars and other commercial activities, would fulfill the intention of the 2035 Specific Plan for this Downtown Neighborhood by enabling this project to engage with the Woodland Hills community thru this new interesting commercial activity area, while also promoting small business, along Canoga Avenue.

2. The WHWCNC is requesting that the Applicant strongly reconsider making a percentage of his residential units meet the State defined rental rate for "Affordable Housing" which the Applicant has previously rejected.
3. The 243 new deciduous trees for the property must be in tree containers of the following sizes: Maximum of 25% of total in at least 15-gallon size containers; 25% of total in 24” wood box containers; 25% of total in 36” wood box containers; and 25% of total in 48” wood box containers.
4. In the event that the Applicant cannot negotiate unobstructed connectivity (6 AM to 10 PM) with adjoining properties in order to provide the required connectivity and street access mandated by the 2035 WC Specific Plan, the Applicant shall enlist the assistance of the relevant Council District office or, if necessary, the LA City Attorney to assure the Specific Plan connectivity mandate is fulfilled.
5. All plans presented either in person or electronically October 13, 2021 to the Board of the WHWCNC shall be dated as such and, shall be re-submitted to Planning as a final project plan application submittal.
6. The applicant will not submit any significant, further updated plans or changes without first presenting them to the WHWCNC for support. Any modifications to the elevation(s)/ architecture of any and all future phases that are no longer in substantial conformance will be presented first to the WHWCNC for support before submitting them to City Planning. Additionally, all conditions herein shall be printed on one of the Project Summary pages as a commitment to--and acceptance of--these conditions.

7. The Applicant will place a project sign on each appropriate Phase of the project at the beginning of construction of sufficient size that is clearly visible to the street showing a rendering of the proposed/approved project building, plus specifics as to the size, ownership and contact information. Upon receipt of a Certificate of Occupancy, the signs for that building shall be removed.

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 subsequent recommendations to SUPPORT this motion presented on October 13, 2021.

Motion: Marty Lipkin

Second: Lauren Coffman

Vote: **Aye: 7** **Nay: 1** **Abstain: 0** **Excused from Meeting: 1**