



# Agenda Report

Design Review Board

---

**Date:** December 12, 2024

**To:** Design Review Board

**From:** Ben Pongetti, Community Development Director  
Luis G. Escobedo, Assistant Director of Community Development  
Alan Hernandez, Associate Planner

**Subject:** 40-Unit, Three-story Townhome Residential Development (Olson Project)  
13412-13420 Franklin Street and 7336-7362 Painter Avenue  
Development Review Permit No. DRP24-0020

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Review the architectural design of a new 40-unit, residential project for compliance with the design guidelines of the Whittier Municipal Code (WMC) and consider one of the following actions:

1. Approve Development Review No. DRP24-0020 as presented, with conditions;
2. Approve Development Review No. DRP24-0020 with amended conditions; or,
3. Continue Development Review No. DRP24-0020 to allow the applicant to further revise the design of the project.

## **Environmental Review**

The project Development Review No. DRP24-0020 and Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. TTM24-0002 (VTM No. 84459) is categorically exempt pursuant to Class 32, Section 15332 (In-Fill Development Project). However, the action of the Design Review Board does not constitute final approval of the proposed development, therefore, the DRB approval is not a "project" subject to CEQA review.

## **BACKGROUND**

**Location:** 13412-13420 Franklin Street and 7336-7362 Painter Avenue  
(A.I.N. 8142-003-008, 011, 069, 070)

**Applicant:** Brian Geis, Olson Company

**Owner:** Dominic and Severina Guadagno

**Zoning:** C-O, Commercial Office Zone

**Request:** To approve the architectural design of a new three story, 40-unit townhome, residential development.

The site is currently occupied by a two-story commercial building, a two-story residential building, and two single-story commercial buildings. According to business license records, the commercial buildings are partially occupied by various tenants including a church, residential, professional office, and medical office. One of the commercial buildings recently underwent interior renovations as a result of a tenant moving in, but the site shows signs of deferred maintenance and obsolescence.

On March 29, 2024, the applicant, Brian Geis with Olson Company, submitted the following applications:

- Development Review Project No. DRP24-0020; and,
- Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. TTM24-0002 (VTTM No. 84459)

On Thursday, November 7, 2024, the applicant hosted a voluntary community meeting inviting surrounding property owners and residents. At the community meeting, the applicant presented the project and answered general questions regarding the project. The questions received during the meeting concerned the project site layout, adding to the existing parking deficiencies in the surrounding neighborhood, negative impacts to existing traffic conditions, the unit affordability level, and concern from current tenants having to vacate the site after years of operation. It should be noted that the community meeting was not a project notification requirement of the City of Whittier. The community meeting invitation letter has been included in the Agenda Report as Attachment C for the Board's reference.

Pursuant to Section 18.56.045(D) of the Whittier Municipal Code (WMC), the architectural design of the proposed building under Development Review No. DRP24-0020 is subject to the Design Review Board's review and approval. Development Review No. DRP24-0020 and Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. TTM24-0002 (VTTM No. 84459) will also be subject to the Planning Commission's review and approval.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Facts**

| <div style="text-align: center;"> <b>PROPERTY DESCRIPTION</b><br/>                     The proposed project is located on the northeast corner of Mar Vista Street and Painter Avenue                 </div> |   |                          |  |
|--|---|--------------------------|--|
|  |   |                          |  |
|  | <b>ZONING</b>                             | <b>GENERAL PLAN</b>      | <b>LAND USE</b>  |
| <b>Site</b>  | C-O,<br>Commercial Office Zone            | Office                   | Medical Office, Professional Office, Church, and residential buildings with Surface Parking Lot, |
| <b>North</b>   | C-O,<br>Commercial Office Zone            | Office                   | Multi-Family Residential   |
| <b>South</b>   | C-O,<br>Commercial Office Zone            | Office                   | Office   |
| <b>East</b>  | R-4,<br>Heavy Multiple-Family Residential | High Density Residential | Multi-Family Residential   |
| <b>West</b>  | PQP,<br>Public and Quasi Public           | Public and Quasi Public  | LA County Courthouse   |

**Table No. 1. – Surrounding Land Uses with the Zoning Classification**

## **Olson Project**

### **Development Review No. DRP24-0020**

Development Review No. DRP24-0020 proposes a new 40-unit townhome residential development with site improvements.

### **Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. TTM24-0002 (VTTM 84459)**

Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. TTM24-0002 (VTTM No. 84459) proposes subdivision of the project site for 40 condominiums. As noted above, all applications (Development Review No. DRP24-0020 and Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. TTM24-0002 (VTTM No. 84459)) will be subject to the Planning Commission's review and approval.

### **Site Plan**

The applicant is proposing to construct a 40-unit, three-story, residential condominium project with garages on the ground floor on a 62,291-square foot (1.43-acres) lot. The project site is significantly sloping downward towards Painter, located on an irregular, but generally rectangular-shaped lot. The Ficus trees located within the public right-of-way (Painter Avenue) will remain intact and will be protected in places. The applicant will be required to comply with the procedures outlined in the City Parkway Tree Manual. Staff would like to note that the existing city parklet located at the corner of Mar Vista Street and Painter Avenue will remain intact.

As illustrated on Image No. 1 below, the project is located at to the east of Painter Avenue between Mar Vista Street and Franklin Street. All four buildings are situated on the westerly portion of the lot adjacent to Painter Avenue. Two of the buildings are facing each other creating an interior courtyard, and the other two buildings are fronting the street (Franklin Street and Mar Vista Street).

### **Access**

Pedestrian access at "Olson Project" has been designed to ensure ease of movement and enhance connectivity to surrounding areas. There are three primary pedestrian access points from the public right-of-way (Franklin Street, Painter Avenue, and Mar Vista Street), so residents and visitors can easily walk to the property.





Image No. 1 – Project site and the vehicular/pedestrian access from the alleyway

## **Floor Plan**

The project consists of three-story attached condominiums with garages on the ground floor. The residential units at "Olson Project" come in four distinct types, offering a range of sizes. The units vary in size, ranging from 1,202 square feet to 1,624 square feet.

In total, there are 40 units, categorized into four primary configurations:

- Eight (8) 1,202-square foot, two-bedroom units;
- Eight (8) 1,270-square-foot, two-bedroom units;
- Twelve (12) 1,412-square-foot, three-bedrooms; and
- Twelve (12) 1,624-square-foot, four-bedroom units.

Five of the project's units will offer live-work flexibility with an open floor plan. The units are labeled as "Opt. Flex Space/Den Live-Work Units" and will have approximately 160 square feet of habitable area on the first floor for home occupation use.

## **Amenities**

The site includes one open space area, with the features shown on page L-1 of attachment F:

- Wood Shade Structure;
- Picnic Table & BBQ Area;
- Mailboxes;
- Two bicycle rack to accommodate eight (6) bike stalls; and,
- Courtyard & Decorative Pavements.

## **Design Guidelines**

The Whittier Municipal Code (WMC) Architectural Style Guidelines serve as a framework that describes the prominent characteristics and architectural styles found throughout the city. The neighborhood is made up of various architectural styles and development types. Staff's observation is that there is not a predominant architectural style in the general area of the project. The proposed project was evaluated by staff in the context of surrounding developments in accordance with the Whittier Municipal Code Architectural Style Guidelines and where applicable unique characteristics of the area and its relationship to adjacent developments, including the LA County Courthouse and Whittier City Hall.

The applicant's architect, Alan Scales with KTGy, has designed "Olson Project" as a "Spanish Colonial Revival" architectural style. The architect provided Attachment E, "Architectural Synopsis," which summarizes the architecture style and building placement of the building. Staff requests the Design Review Board (DRB) review the project design for compliance with the site design guidelines, building mass and increment, architectural style, and façade composition with the goal to enhance the overall character and quality of City of Whittier.



### **Scale and Massing**

As shown on the plans and in Image No. 2 below, the architect incorporates a 40'-0" tower feature at the corner of Mar Vista Street and Painter Avenue to create an architectural focal point. For the building's scale and massing, the architect has provided some building articulation including façade offsets, and architectural projections. A secondary tower like feature has been located at the northwest corner (Painter Avenue and Franklin Street). The overall building height and massing of the project is compatible with the surrounding community. There are two-story buildings abutting the project site and a three-story LA County Courthouse building is located across Painter Avenue.



**Image No. 2** – View: Mar Vista Street and Painter Avenue.

### **Architectural Trim and Materials**

The project design incorporates a variety of window enhancements consisting of windowsills, awnings, and shutters. Although a few entrance doors are enhanced with decorative tile and with recessed arched entries, the majority have no distinctive enhancements. The larger massing of the tower feature incorporates scalloped sill/shell on the windows. The project also incorporates a wood box bay window along the elevations facing Painter Avenue and Franklin Street.

The color and material board is included as Attachment H. Below is a list of the building materials:

- Stucco Extra White (SW7006) as the main building material;
- Decorative Iron and Railing painted Caviar (SW6990);
- Tile Roofing (8830 Albuquerque);
- Decks painted in a Hickory Sand Finish;
- Garage doors painted in Dark Clove (SW9183);
- Stucco Prairie Grass (SW7546) over foam trims;
- Fascia and Wood-Like Elements Paint Dark Clove (SW9183); and,
- Decorative Tiles around some windows.

After the project went through a thorough evaluation and multiple revisions with staff, the applicant requested to schedule the project to the next available Design Review Board meeting. Overall, the project design meets the intent of the Design Guidelines that are outlined in the WMC. However, staff is requesting that the Design Review Board consider staff's recommendation for additional architectural enhancements. Furthermore, the applicant is requesting that the project be considered under the guidelines pertaining to Optional Development Standards which are found in Section 18.22.040 of the WMC.

The optional development standards allow for some concessions such as increasing the building's tower height to 40'-0" and allowing the building along Franklin Street to encroach into the required 15' front yard setback granted that the building setback's average is 15' minimum. In exchange for those concessions, an increase in the quality of the project is required to achieve greater than minimum standard requirements for amenities provided by the code. The Optional Development Standards are reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission. Staff is asking that the Design Review Board review and consider additional architectural enhancements that would not only improve the project design but also increase its livability.

Staff is asking that the Design Review board consider and condition the following enhancements:

### **Primary Building Architectural Enhancement Options**

- Provide enhancements of the tower feature located at the corner of Mar Vista Street and Painter Avenue (Image #3, yellow highlight) with multiple single wood box windows, double wood box windows, or using alternative mixed materials (stone/brick veneer).
- Provide a secondary focal point on the building corner adjacent to the intersection of Franklin Street and Painter Avenue (Image #4, yellow highlight) with similar enhancements as main corner.

- Provide some additional building articulation to the building fronting on Mar Vista Street (Image #3 green highlight) by using alternative materials for the balconies or carrying the middle pop-out vertically to the roofline creating a modified roofline and provide some additional enhancements on the flushed wall (Image #3, red highlight) by utilizing similar enhancements to the existing elevations fronting Painter Avenue.
- Provide additional building articulation along rear wall planes by breaking up the wall planes, different building heights and rooflines, or providing significant window enhancements that add depth to the wall plane. More specifically along the driveway aisle.
- Provide decorative patterned tile or alternative design around all entrance doors including the interior courtyard.
- Provide windows on all garage doors with different styles for the single and double garage doors.

### **Secondary Site Enhancements Options**

- Provide a decorative base feature on all alternative structures (patio covers, mailboxes, etc.)
- Use dark color mullions on all windows to create contrast.
- Provide enhanced tubular steel wrought iron design along all street frontages. Final design should be reflected on the plans.
- Provide pilasters with alternative materials along all street perimeter walls including retaining wall, standard 40 feet on center, with a two-inch overhang block cap.
- Increase the size of the common area trellis feature and provide additional amenities in the open space (additional grills with permanent islands, additional benches, and tables, etc.).
- Provide enhanced decorative pavement on all internal pedestrian walkways including the walkway that connects the project to Mar Vista Street.





**Image No. 3** – View: Mar Vista Street and Painter Avenue.



**Image No. 4** – View: Franklin Street and Painter Avenue.

### Signage

All signage for the project will be approved under a separate Development Review application to be reviewed and approved by the Director of Community Development.

### Public Comments

As of writing this report, staff has not received inquiries regarding the proposed project.

### **Conclusion**

Staff believes that the proposed townhome residential project has been designed to comply with the intent of the design guidelines of the Whittier Municipal Code and will enhance the prominent street corners. Staff request that the DRB evaluate the Spanish Colonial Revival design and provide direction related to staff's recommendations.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Draft DRB Resolution for Development Review DRP24-0020, with conditions of approval
- B. Location Map
- C. Olson Project Community Workshop flyer dated November 7, 2024
- D. Architectural Plans dated November 25, 2024
- E. Architecture Synopsis
- F. Landscape Plans
- G. Project Renderings
- H. Material and Color Board
- I. Amenities Cut Sheets
- J. Site Photographs