

# ATTACHMENT 5





January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Mr. George Schroeder  
City of Sunnyvale  
456 W. Olive Avenue  
Sunnyvale, CA 94086

Re: Edwina Benner Plaza, 460 Persian Drive- State Density Bonus Law Development Request

Dear Mr. Schroeder,

The development proposal at 460 Persian Drive is 66 units of much-needed affordable housing for families, including 30 1-bedrooms, 19 2-bedrooms, and 17 3-bedroom units. All units at Edwina Benner Plaza, except for a manager's unit, will be restricted to low-income tenants by a City of Sunnyvale regulatory agreement, among other agreements. 7 units will be reserved for extremely low income households (less than 30% AMI), 39 units will be reserved for low income households (between 30% and 50% AMI), and 19 units will be reserved for moderate income households (between 51% and 60% AMI). The City of Sunnyvale has provided a conditional commitment to loan the project \$5 million, which will restrict the entire property to low-income residents.

Pursuant to the State Density Bonus and Other Incentives Law found at California Government Code Section 65915(b)(1)(B), we request to utilize the incentives allowed for the Low Income affordability category. The Density Bonus Law, found at California Government Code Section 65915(d)(2)(c), further allows for a 35% increase in density and up to 3 development incentives or concessions if at least 30% of the units are restricted to Low Income affordability levels. This project will provide 65 affordable units, of which all units will at least be restricted for Low Income households. Total affordable units will exceed the law's requirements, which means the projects is eligible for the maximum provisions of the Density Bonus Law. Therefore, we request a density increase of 35% to the 47 units now permitted under the City's R-4 zoning designation. We hereby request the following benefits:

1. A development Concession increasing maximum lot coverage, allowing the gross building area above grade to exceed the current maximum of 40% in Zoning Code Section 19.32.020.
2. A development Concession decreasing useable open space to 205 square feet per unit, which is less than what is required in Zoning Code Section 19.37.040.
3. A development Concession decreasing the required parking count to 87 spaces.

Concession #1 is required because a larger building footprint is necessary in order to attain the 35% density bonus increase. Concession #2 is necessary because the site is not large enough to provide the required open space given the number of units allowed under the density bonus. Please note that the project will meet the City's requirement for private open space, in part compensating for the reduced public open space. Concession #3 is necessary due to the funding regulations of the state Affordable Housing Sustainable Communities (AHSC) program. As an affordable housing project that relies on public funds for construction, many of our building program features are subject to funder standards. The AHSC program is a critical potential resource for our project and is designed in part to reduce greenhouse gases. Under its Greenhouse Gas Reduction Quantification Methodology, projects that provide more parking than that which the Institute for Transportation Engineering (ITE) recommends are disadvantaged with a lower GHG reduction score, while applicants that propose fewer than the ITE-recommended amount improve their project's advantage with greater GHG reductions. The ITE standard for the project is 90 spaces, which means that our proposed 87 spaces would make the project have an increased score. As a result, complying with the City's parking standards for affordable housing would not only impose a financial hardship on the property, it would make the project less competitive for a critical affordable housing resource, without which the project has a much lower chance of being constructed.

Fortunately, Benner Plaza is in an ideal location for reduced parking because it is well-served by public transportation and walkable amenities. The Mountain View-Winchester line of the VTA light rail system stops within 1/2 mile of the project site, connecting to destinations such as employment centers across Highway 237 and



in downtown San Jose, as well as to regional transportation hubs such as the Caltrain/VTA stop in in downtown Mountain View. The 26 line of the VTA bus system also stops within a ¼ mile of the project site, connecting to destinations in Sunnyvale and San Jose. Next to both the bus and light rail stop, and within walking distance, there is a local shopping center, including a site for a grocery store.

The project sponsor will encourage active transportation and ridership on transit by providing at least one year of free VTA transit passes (EcoPasses) to all new residents. MidPen commits to continuously evaluating whether the project can support providing passes in subsequent years. Project financing for affordable housing is complex and depends on predictable, long term expenses. We cannot predict the cost of the passes 55 years out, the typical term of our loan from the City of Sunnyvale. Still, we commit to annually revisiting whether the project's budget can support the passes, and we will apply for state Affordable Housing Sustainable Communities funding that would pay for the passes for three years.

Furthermore, pursuant to the City of Sunnyvale's Special Development Permit process, we hereby request the following deviations:

1. A deviation for the side yard setback along the east side of the property.
2. A deviation for the additional front yard setback at levels 3 and 4.
3. A deviation for the minimum landscaping square footage required per unit.

The requested deviations will enable the project to provide additional units of much-needed affordable housing in an efficient floor plan. The proposed nine foot minimum side yard setback at the east property line will provide effective privacy separation from the neighboring development since the developments will be separated by more than 50 feet. A row of parking and an emergency vehicle access lane on the neighboring property run parallel to the property line, providing a permanent buffer between the two developments. Residential units along the east side of the property are oriented so that the living areas and private balconies face into the private courtyard rather than towards the neighboring development. At the frontage along Persian Drive, the building complies with the 20 foot minimum front yard setback; however, a portion of the building encroaches into the additional front yard setback required for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> stories. A reduced front setback does not impact the privacy of any neighbors, since there are no residences on the northern side of Persian Drive. While the project is able to exceed minimum requirements for total landscape area, the site is not large enough to meet required landscape square footage per unit with the 35% density bonus increase. Large planters at the private residential courtyards and in the front yard maximize the impact of landscaping for resident enjoyment.

Finally, pursuant to the City of Sunnyvale's green building density bonus, we request an additional 2 units be added to the project's density. The project will obtain at least 110 points on Build it Green's Green Point Rated scale. Please see the attached draft of the project's Green Point Rated checklist, which has 131 points.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matt Lewis', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Matt Lewis  
Project Manager





## DESIGN NARRATIVE

Edwina Benner Plaza is a vibrant, multi-family community bringing 66 new homes to the City of Sunnyvale.

Bounded by Highway 237, an active Hindu temple, and residential uses, the site plan responds to and respects the existing residential, civic, and commercial context. Elements on the site are organized to promote an environment for healthy living, to cultivate a sense of community, and to maximize connection to the landscape.

The building is sited to address the proximity of the highway, which runs parallel to Persian Drive. The massing strategy and program arrangement—orienting the residential program away from the front of the building—shield the common areas and residential units from noise and pollution.

A strong visual move, the “folded” wall facing the freeway along Persian Drive is playful and iconic. The sweeping arc and rhythm of the folds provides visual appeal and conveys a sense of building identity to passing drivers, while the nuanced colors and pattern of the materials reads well at a smaller scale, enriching the pedestrian experience.

Residents and visitors approach this face of the building through a grove of trees and defined entry plaza. The main entry, demarcated by a strong vertical break in the folded wall, interrupts the visual weight of the folded volume to create a clear focal point.

This entryway is framed by community and office spaces facing Persian Drive that activate the ground level. At the community room and office suite, the folded facade lifts to create a visual connection between the interior spaces and the grove of trees and plantings. Storefront windows into these gathering spaces provide transparency, light, and visual interest for pedestrians and residents. As the folded facade moves toward the east property line, it reaches back to the ground to conceal mechanical services and to provide visual balance. At the fourth level, a setback in the façade breaks up the massing to reveal the fitness room, which provides views over the freeway to the bay and surrounding hills.

The main entryway passes by the office suite and opens into a sheltered at-grade main courtyard that connects with the building’s community and service spaces—and protected parking beyond. This generous on-grade courtyard provides a sunny community gathering space and offers a welcome into the life of the building. The visibility of covered parking is

minimized at the back of the site, concentrating all residential and community uses at the sheltered center of the site.

Above, a strong linear circulation spine connects three residential “pods” separated by two large podium courtyards. The circulation links the residences via a series of open-air bridges that provide a connection to the landscaped courtyards and take advantage of Sunnyvale’s pleasant weather.

The building’s east, west, and south elevations express a residential character, reflecting the adjacent townhouses and temple through a more restrained use of form, material, color, and detail.

The long east and west elevations are punctuated by views into lush podium courtyards and feature vertical bands where varied color and material texture provide contrast and depth. Recessed balconies—highlighted with accent colors—connect the apartments to the courtyard spaces, which provide planting, light, and open space for each dwelling unit.

The prominent “folded” facade on Persian Drive consists of two colorful volumes separated by a strong vertical circulation spine. The light volume, with warm yellow accents, floats above a band of storefront at the ground level. As a counterpoint, the darker volume has deep terracotta accents, and serves to anchor the folded skin as it wraps the eastern corner of the building. A variety of wide and narrow windows are arranged in the light volume to respond to the residential living spaces contained within, while openings are limited into the service spaces of the darker red volume.

The overall palette draws inspiration from the warm neutrals of the surrounding context, punctuated with colorful accents. Hues from the prominent Persian Drive elevation are incorporated at the three residential volumes: A middle light-toned volume, highlighted with deep terracotta accents, is flanked by two darker volumes enlivened with a pale yellow tone at the recesses.

The predominant cladding is horizontal Hardie siding, with vertical board-and-batten detailing at recesses and infill panels at floor levels providing visual interest. Wood balconies at the east, south, and courtyard elevations provide natural texture, visual richness, and material variety.

All windows are recessed and accented by a full height vertical trim that extends beyond the plane of the wall, adding depth and articulation. This fenestration and detail references a residential vernacular of single-hung windows with decorative trim, yet also serves as an effective shading device. Floor-to-ceiling windows provide ample daylight for living spaces, with the largest apertures facing the courtyard whenever possible to maximize views to open green space.

An access lane runs along the west edge of the site, providing access to the at-grade courtyard and open-air stair as well as the covered parking at the rear of the site. Textured concrete and climbing vines add detail and greenery along the east side of this lane, which provides pattern and way finding through permeable pavers. Along the west side, a landscaped planting strip lines the redwood property line fence.