

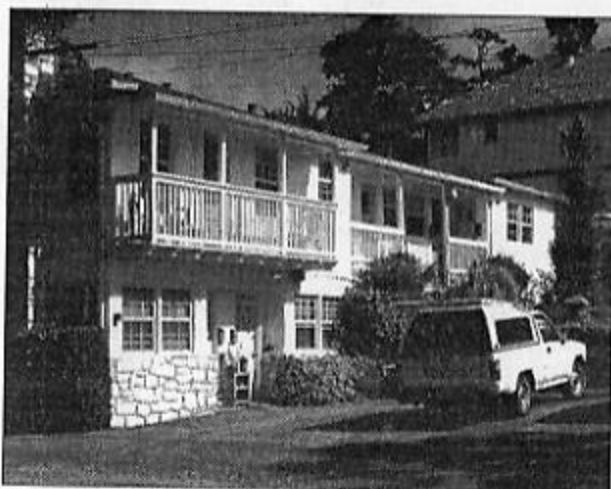
Zoning code may be loosened for 100 percent affordable housing

By MARY BROWNFIELD

THE NONPROFIT that provides 90 percent of the city's mandated low-income housing wants to remodel one of its properties to add more affordable apartments for seniors. The Carmel Foundation received a go-ahead from the Carmel Planning Commission last week, though planners will first need to amend the zoning code to allow it.

Trevett Court's two buildings were constructed in the 1940s. After the foundation bought the property on Dolores

Street between Fourth and Fifth avenues in 1964, the complex was converted to nine apartments ranging from 300 square feet to 600 square feet. Reserved for low-income



PHOTO/MARY BROWNFIELD

Trevett Court on Dolores Street contains nine apartments for low-income seniors, but the Carmel Foundation plans to replace the 60-year-old buildings with 14 new low-rent apartments. City codes would have to change to allow it.

seniors, the units rent for \$150 to \$750 per month.

"This complex is very old, and while it has been maintained extremely well, there are limits to what can be done, and the building is deteriorating," president/CEO Jill Sheffield and board chairman Sarah Berling wrote in a letter

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the commission. "For example, this past year we had to replace a porch on the south-facing building because it was sinking; a few years ago, a refrigerator fell through the floor."

The new, two-story building designed by architect Eric Miller would contain 14 units ranging from 460 square feet to 600 square feet, two community rooms and a six-space subterranean parking garage.

But as designed, the building would violate the residential-commercial district zoning code's setbacks, height limits, density and floor area, according to planner Sean Conroy. He suggested changing the code to allow more flexibility for projects that feature 100 percent low-income units.

"Staff is in support of increased affordable housing," he said. Conroy recommended drafting a "form based code" for such projects. The code would "focus primarily on the physical form of new [low income] development," rather than density, setbacks and land use.

"We would not establish a density, as long as they [100 percent affordable-housing complexes] meet the standards of the Uniform Building Code, and we would be flexible on parking. The controlling factors would be site design and building design, so they conform with the buildings around them," principal planner Brian Roseth explained. "That's very different than in the past. But we think it's appropriate for this type of project."

Residential, not industrial

Miller agreed with planning staff's suggestion to amend the zoning code to accommodate plans such as the foundation's proposed demolition and rebuild.

"We hope to get some direction from the commission today," he said. "We would like to move forward with the project, and of course we can't move forward until we understand where you want us to go."

The design would be more residential than industrial in appearance, he said.

Foundation representatives have discussed their plans with surrounding property owners, according to Berling, and while the owner of a nearby inn wants to ensure his views are preserved, others said they would not even need to see the plans.

The city may exempt projects for low-income residents from standards for density, setbacks and land use

"We can design it so their upper floor, which does have peaks of the ocean, would continue to have peaks of the ocean," Berling said of the Candlelight Inn.

The development would also require another .167 acre-foot to .209 acre-feet of water, which Conroy said the city could allocate from the share that returned to its coffers last year when developer John Mandurrigo abandoned his plans for a 13-unit senior home downtown.

Last December, the commission recommended approval of a water allocation category that sets aside water for affordable housing, though the city council has yet to adopt the new category.

Provided with some rough sketches and floor plans, commissioners opted to wait and discuss the design when the foundation returns with more detailed drawings.

Planning commissioner Bill Strid — recently elected to a third year as chairman — gave Miller simple direction: to ensure the buildings would be residential in character.

The commission directed planning staff to prepare the ordinance that will amend the zoning code for projects featuring 100 percent low-income and very-low-income housing.