



April 11, 2025

Chris Yeager
Associate Planner
Development Services Department
77 Fair Drive, Costa Mesa, CA 92626
(714) 754-4883

RE: 3150 Bear Street (APN 141-521-48) – Development Application Submittal No. 3, Application Letter

Dear Mr. Yeager,

Our Entitlement Package has been updated to address all City comments received for the Bear St. project located at 3150 Bear Street. The project consists of 142 residential units, including 20 two-story detached condos and 122 four-story stacked flats on 6.125 acres. The project includes internal private drives, open space amenities, guest parking, frontage improvements, and existing EVA access improvements.

Two community meetings were held for the public on March 23 and March 24, 2025, at the project site. The community meetings were held open-house style where the public could ask questions about the project at different stations which covered different components of the project (land use, engineering, landscape, traffic, architecture). There were approximately 50 people in attendance between the two meetings. Most public attendees were curious about general project features. Some attendees were interested in purchasing a future home on-site, and others shared concerns related to traffic, pedestrian access to Olympic, streetscape improvements, density and setbacks. Comment cards and sign-in sheets from the public meetings have been included as part of this submittal for the City's reference.

The 6.125-acre site is currently designated in the General Plan as "General Commercial" and is zoned "Administrative and Professional (AP)." As such, the project proposes to amend the General Plan designation to "High Density Residential" and rezone the property to "Multiple-Family Residential (R-3)," which both permit a density of up to 20 du/ac, i.e. up to 122 units.

At the request of the City, an Affordable Housing Marketing Plan and Affordability Guidelines were prepared for the project by VCCDC, and submitted to the City on March 28, 2025, for review and comment. The Affordable Housing Marketing Plan covers the proposed 7 Very-Low deed restricted affordable homes (5% of base density of 122 units, rounded up to the nearest whole number), The proposed 7 Very-Low income housing units proposed allows for a 20% density increase through the State's Density Bonus Law (DBL). With the Density bonus, a total of up to 146 homes is permitted; however, only 142 units are proposed. The proposed project consists of two types of new for-sale homes, detached and attached condominiums, as outlined on P3.0 of the revised Entitlement Set, and as shown in the architectural plan set. A separate Density Bonus Law (DBL) letter is included detailing the projects application for the Density Bonus and associated Incentives and Waivers.

The project also includes an application for Tentative Tract Map for Condominium purposes. The map proposes a single lot subdivision with 142 airspace units. As such, the property is subject to Costa Mesa Municipal Code (CMMC) Section 13-41, which provide special development standards related to residential common interest development standards. Two of the standards allow flexibility in design to avoid the long-row effect of larger buildings. While this does not necessarily require a waiver under Density Bonus Law, the project requires alternative design considerations to achieve the proposed densities as described below:

- (1) Development Standard CMMC 13-41(b)(2)a: Structures having dwelling units attached side by side shall avoid the long-row effect by being composed of no more than six dwelling units. Alternative designs which accomplish the same purpose may be approved by the final review authority.**
- (2) Development Standard CMMC 13-41(b)(2)b: Structures having dwelling units attached side by side shall avoid the long-row effect with a break in the facade by having an offset in the front building line of at least four feet for every two dwelling units within such structure. Alternate designs which accomplish the same purpose may be approved by the final review authority.**

Rather than providing side by side unit, the project includes a series of stacked flats in buildings that are larger than six dwelling units to achieve the proposed density. Smaller buildings and staggered setbacks would require significantly more space on the project site to accommodate these setbacks and building separations required by the Building Code. Instead, the project includes larger buildings, similar to what is often seen in an apartment community of similar density. These units are designed to offer a middle ground between apartments and traditional row-house style townhomes to provide greater affordability and opportunities for first-time homebuyers. Density is a key component to affordability as it allows builders to spread the high cost of land and infrastructure across a greater number of units. From a design perspective, the proposed buildings have been thoughtfully designed to reduce massing by including a partial fourth story; adding balconies, cantilevers, and other horizontal massing breaks, and varying roof forms that provide articulation to minimize the overall bulk and long-row effect of these larger buildings.

Project construction will take approximately two years and would begin approximately 8 months to 1 year following entitlement approval. Site development is anticipated to begin in February 2026. Construction activities will consist of three consecutive phases: (1) demolition of the existing paved surfaces and structures, clearing, and site preparation; (2) site development, including grading, utility installation, and roadway construction; (3) vertical construction and landscaping installation. Demolition will take approximately 8 weeks, rough grading will take approximately 10 weeks, and utilities and paving will take approximately 24 weeks. Vertical construction is anticipated to begin in December 2026 and be completed by December 2027. Model units are anticipated to be open in May 2027. The maximum depth of excavation will be approximately 8 feet (4 feet raw cut and 4 feet over excavation). A construction phasing plan is being prepared and will be shared with the City prior to project hearings.

With approval of the proposed GPA, the proposed high-density residential development would be located at a site consistent with the City's General Plan Land Use Element which states that high-density areas should be located in proximity to transportation routes within convenient distances to shopping and employment centers. The project would also be consistent with the Multiple-Family Residential District (R-3) intent to promote development of multi-family ownership dwelling units. The proposed two-story detached condos and four-story stacked flats floorplans range in size from 1,062 SF (2 bed, 2 bath) to 2,364 SF (4 bed, 3 bath), offering a variety of plan types to accommodate a range of buyers, including first-time homebuyers. The architectural style or styles of buildings within a community strongly define a community's character. To create successful communities, architectural design must embody methods that are flexible enough to meet the changing needs of the consumer market yet, must also be visually pleasing and complementary to the surrounding neighborhood. The project aims to provide a contemporary interpretation of traditional styles. Two (2) variations of color schemes are proposed for the two-story detached condos, as well as the four-story stacked flats. The proposed project would complement surrounding development, while contributing to Costa Mesa's housing inventory with the provision of new, quality, for-sale residential units. As an infill development, the project will also serve to improve street frontage and will provide pedestrian improvements on Bear Street.

Meritage Homes believes that the housing proposed by this new community delivers the type of missing-middle for-sale housing that is desperately needed in the region and to offer the benefits of homeownership to Costa Mesa residents. We are very excited for the opportunity to bring this proposal to the City of Costa Mesa and look forward to your comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Johanna Crooker". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Johanna" and last name "Crooker" clearly distinguishable.

Johanna Crooker, AICP

Vice President, Forward Planning and Entitlements, Southern California

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