



STAFF REPORT
4/24/2024

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Gabriel Perez, Development Services Director

SUBJECT: Proposed Chelsea Investment Corporation Sixth Street Senior Apartments Architectural Style Options

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council review architectural style and massing configuration options for the proposed Sixth Street Senior Apartments and provide direction.

BACKGROUND:

Chelsea Investment Corporation has constructed affordable housing projects in the City of Coachella that includes the 144-unit multifamily Cesar Chavez Villas Apartments and two Downtown 6th Street mixed use affordable housing developments, which include the 105-unit Pueblo Viejo Villas and the 108-unit Covalda Apartments. The City of Coachella partnered with Chelsea Investment Corporation (Chelsea) for the Strategic Growth Council Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) grant application for the development of a new 4-story affordable housing development project on two existing vacant parcels of 0.86 acres on 6th Street (SEC of Tripoli Avenue and 6th Street) that conceptually includes 53 affordable senior apartment units ranging in size from 578 sq. ft. (1 bedroom) to 733 sq. ft. (2 bedroom), 1st floor commercial Space of 4,742 sq. ft., a Community Room of 1,545 sq. ft. and up to 25 On-Site Parking Spaces. With the approval of the TCC grant in November 2023, Chelsea is now preparing a formal architectural package submittal. Due to the location of the proposed project in a central part of the Pueblo Viejo District, staff believes it is essential to ensure high quality architectural design and optimal functionality of the commercial components that enhances the experience for residents and visitors to 6th Street consistent with the Pueblo Viejo Revitalization Plan and General Plan goals. Staff believes this is an opportune time for the City Council to weigh in and communicate design expectations of the project before a formal submittal is made.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

The Pueblo Viejo Implementation Strategy Plan was adopted October 2019 and includes design guidelines to ensure that new development and reuse of existing buildings will create a new, dynamic, harmonious, and unique downtown of which all citizens can be proud. Four primary architectural styles are explicitly allowed – Spanish Colonial Revival, Mission Revival, Neoclassical, Postmodern/Architectural Innovation. The variety of permitted architectural styles

derive from the existing eclectic nature of architectural styles in the Pueblo Viejo District. There is a common misconception that there is a requirement of Spanish architectural style on Sixth Street as many of the City's newer buildings incorporate Spanish Colonial Revival design including the Coachella Library, Fire Station, Senior Center, Coachella Kidney Institute, Riverside County Department of Public Social Services, Tranvia Restaurant, Pueblo Viejo Villas and Covalda Apartments. The proposed development is located in the Sixth Street Subarea that envisions a walkable "main street" environments with higher densities and multi-story structures incorporating significant details in the building' architecture, especially the ground floor. Businesses under the guidelines should have high-quality pedestrian-scale frontages to offer a rewarding experience for pedestrians.

Chelsea Investment Corporation Sixth Street Senior Apartments proposals

Staff suggested that conceptual architectural proposals for the proposed Sixth Street Senior Apartments project be presented to the City Council in advance of a formal submittal in order to receive feedback on the desired architectural style at the proposed Coachella Downtown area location. Staff communicated to the Chelsea team the importance of ensuring high quality architectural design for the new project and ground floor commercial that can be successful and a vibrant addition to Coachella's Downtown. Staff particularly stressed the importance of high first floor commercial ceilings consistent with Pueblo Viejo plan, which encourages 15-foot first floor ceilings. Both Chelsea's Pueblo Viejo Villas and Covalda projects are constructed at a 9-foot first floor height, which has resulted in marginal commercial spaces with exposed piping and AC equipment that project below the ceiling. The Pueblo Viejo Villas commercial spaces were unable to attract retail business leases that open beyond 5 p.m. and contribute to a thriving downtown. One commercial space remains vacant. Staff requests that the new project provide a first floor height of at least 13 feet and that a minimum of once space at either building corner include a higher ceiling height that could be facilitated by removing the planned second floor unit. Staff has also conveyed that some of the commercial tenant spaces allow for potential restaurant food service, which were not incorporated into the Pueblo Viejo Villas or Covalda projects.

The ultimate height proposed for the project is approximately 55 ft for the Spanish Colonial Revival style and 51 feet for the modern design. Both concepts would proposed a stepped approach to the 4th story level to reduce the massing impacts of the project although the ultimate height permitted is five stories or 75 feet, whichever is less. The Building Official has requested that universal design and age in place practices be planned with the initial design stages of the project.

Chelsea initially provided a Spanish Colonial Revival project design for City staff to review. Staff communicated the need for incorporating design elements that ensure the high-quality architectural design expectations of the Pueblo Viejo Plan. Staff has concerns that the proposed conceptual Spanish design repeats key design elements that have already been proposed in the Pueblo Viejo Villas and Covalda Apartments project and does not include high quality design features such as smooth stucco, rounded corners, ample individual double barrel mortar packed roof tile, and recessed windows. The Chelsea team has contended previously that such elements add too much cost to the project. The proposed Spanish designs exhibit more modern design with a dominant flat roof parapet design and flush windows. Staff conveyed that strategic placement of high-quality

design features could allow for a more streamlined and affordable Spanish Colonial Revival design. The design team for Chelsea has provided two conceptual architectural plans, which include a Spanish Colonial Revival design versus a modern design.

Figure 1: Conceptual Front Elevation of Spanish Colonial Revival architectural design



Staff suggested that Chelsea attempt a modern design option for review by the City Council, as such designs are more affordable streamlined design with characteristic flat roofs and flush windows. The proposed modern design incorporates a more vertical orientation, no balconies, and vertical awnings. The ground floor retail incorporates narrow windows that appear to be less characteristic of a dynamic storefront.

Figure 2: Conceptual Front Elevation of Modern architectural design



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The proposed Senior Apartment project location is one of the few remaining vacant sites on 6th Street and ensuring a well-designed project is critical to the Pueblo Viejo District's vitality. Staff has observed that this easterly portion of 6th Street does not have a lively pedestrian environment and that this project can contribute in ensuring the City's goals and policies for the Pueblo Viejo district are met. Staff request the City Council:

- Review architectural style and massing configuration options for the proposed Sixth Street Apartments and provide direction.
- Provide feedback on expectations for the ground floor commercial component.

The provided renderings are conceptual in nature and further design refinements will be necessary before a formal architectural package is submitted to the City for consistency with the City's objective design standards for multi-family development.

Attachments:

1. Proposed architectural options (Spanish Architecture vs. Modern Design)
2. Photos of first floor commercial Pueblo Viejo Villas and Covalda Apts

3. Existing Conditions Photos
4. CA Statewide Recent Affordable Housing examples
5. Vicinity Map