

Arguments against the Proposed Condo Plan On National between Butler and Federal

On behalf of my neighborhood, my family and myself, I want the council to know how appalled we were when we witnessed the destruction of the single-story courtyard garden four-plex apartment unit on the southwest corner of Butler and National Boulevard. It was one of 13 such four-plex units that existed on National Boulevard between Butler and Federal. We can't believe that the city allowed one of these beautiful structures to be destroyed. Additionally, the three-story, architecturally unappealing apartment complex that has gone up in its place dumbfounds us. We feel the city has failed to preserve and protect an important and unique element of the neighborhood that we loved and replaced it with something that simply doesn't fit in. We desperately don't want to see this happen again.

The project that Mike Christian has proposed is unacceptable to us. He wants to demolish three more of these courtyard garden apartment buildings; (twelve apartments total) combine the lots, eliminate the green spaces that have been a defining feature of this block for more than 50 years and replace single story apartments with a three-story, three lot wide, condo complex. This will change the character of the whole block and destroy its intended function. The location and history of the block speaks against this project.

In 1947 Paul W. Trousdale bought the Steven's ranch which at the time was mostly lima bean fields. It was just after World War II and Trousdale's idea was to build a community for returning veterans, with a park, a grade school, a market and other amenities. Influenced by the garden movement, and the appeal of outdoor living in Southern California, he built single-story ranch houses of compatible designs, surrounded by sidewalks and landscaped green spaces. He hired Paul Howard, who was a renowned horticulturist and had a nursery on the corner of National and Barrington, to design the streets with matching trees. At first the lots in question were zoned for single-story single family homes to match the zoning of Fritz Burns previously built home across the street. There was such a demand to live in the area from veteran's returning from WWII, Trousdale decided to make these into multiple residential dwellings with the requirements that they remain single story and blend in perfectly with the single family homes on all sides of them. He gave the builder Phil Yousem the job. These courtyard garden apartments were built to provide economic diversity and were designed to mimic one of Trousdale's ranch house designs in order to be totally compatible with his vision. They were kept single story so that they wouldn't intrude on the backyards of the single-story homes behind them.

This whole tract, including the apartments was then put under a homeowner's association to protect it. It is called the Westdale Homeowners Association and the area is called Westdale Trousdale.

Paul Trousdale, Paul Howard, and Phil Yousem succeeded in creating a beautiful and very special neighborhood much loved by its residents. It took my breath away the first time I drove by those courtyard garden apartments, with their beautiful trees. It's the kind of neighborhood that has kids running everywhere - the kind of neighborhood that still has block parties and a wonderful sense of community. The sidewalks, the architecture the landscaping have all combined to create a beautiful space where being a good neighbor feels like the right thing to do. The Los Angeles Times did an article on this neighborhood in September, which mentions it's wonderful "small town" appeal. I've included a copy of that for you to look at. The apartments pictured are not the style built across National, but look at the green spaces around and between each of those lots.

Because of the mid-western small town feel, location site companies regularly use Westdale Trousdale for filming movies, television and commercials.

If you now look at the tract map I've included, you will see that the condos that are proposed by Mr. Christian are to be built on the top of a T shaped block, located within this special community. **You can see that there are no other combined lots on this whole T shaped block. Nor are there any combined lots across the street from this T shaped block. In fact there are no other combined lots between Mar Vista Park and Richland Elementary School, an area consisting of hundreds of single family homes. It's important to know that the zoning for that north side of the street of this proposed condo only allows for small single family homes.** There is a Lutheran Church on the corner, which has always been on a slightly larger lot, but it was specifically designed to fit in with the houses on all sides of it. Even in its recent remodel, they went to great pains to build a beautiful structure that perfectly fits in with all the other buildings on the block including those Courtyard Garden Apartments.

Mr. Christian's condo plan is a bad idea because what happens across the face of this T shape not only affects the other single-story courtyard garden apartments, it affects the single-story houses behind it on Clover, the single story houses across from it on National and all the houses on the vertical side of the T. That is all the houses on Clover, Coolidge, Colby, and Butler. This is a lot of homes. We are talking about hundreds of people's lives. With Mr. Christian's design, instead of seeing trees, these residents, along the vertical side of the T are going to be able to see a three-story condo complex from their front yards. Along Clover, three stories will loom over and peek into their backyards. Along National, the remaining four-plex owners will have their garden tranquility disrupted by views of three stories looking down on them. The neighbors across the street will no longer be looking at the row of carefully matching single-family-looking buildings with gardens but a structure that is three lots wide and towers several stories above them.

Plus, because some of the courtyard apartment owners have no interest in selling, the symmetry of the block would be destroyed.

There have been other combined lots on the edge of this community but all of them faced other commercial structures like the Ralph's Grocery store, not single-story single-family homes and therefore can not serve as precedents.

Because of this unique situation, the community doesn't want this project as it stands.

I am asking on behalf of my children my neighbors and myself that this project be rejected because it will negatively effect our lives and because it doesn't represent good city planning.

1. It is not in keeping with Paul Trousdale's original vision for the community – a vision that has been working beautifully for more than 50 years.
2. It is inconsistent with the nature of the block and the surrounding community.
3. Combining lots will reduce currently required green spaces between buildings.
4. Backyard views of a three-story project will lower the property value of the houses on Clover and make the outdoor living of these people less enjoyable and no longer private.
5. The houses on the vertical of this T shape will have their views and home values diminished.
6. Privacy and safety in the community will be lessened especially for the children.
7. Less expensive garden apartments in symmetry with the rest of the block, the houses behind them, in front of them, beside them and the rest of the homes in Westdale Trousdale, would be replaced with overbuilt condos that are not in a compatible style and are out of the economic range of current tenants.
8. Friends and neighbors who have lived here for decades, some for their whole lives, will be displaced from these apartments and may no longer be able to live on the West Side.
9. Additionally, there will be a loss of suitable location sites, which means a loss of jobs for local location work and loss of income to the affected homeowners.

These courtyard garden apartments are historic, still beautiful and serve an important economic function in this community. Please don't allow them to be destroyed and replaced with something as unappealing and inconsistent with the rest of the neighborhood as the design Mr. Christian proposes.

Don't allow the character of this special community to be diminished.

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