

## The Kirkham Project: Frequently Asked Questions

(Updated March 2017)

**Q:** What is the Kirkham Project?

**A:**

The Kirkham Project represents one of San Francisco's first major urban infill developments in the western section of the City. This project—a redevelopment of the existing Kirkham Heights Apartments—addresses the City's need for more housing and demonstrates a creative design that improves accessibility.

Our goal is to provide a high-quality urban residential community that enhances pedestrian connections to open space and landscaped areas, offers accessible residential units and common areas, provides a range of housing options including affordable and rent controlled units, and supports a wide variety of transportation choices.

**Q:** What is the current state of the property?

**A:**

The Kirkham Heights Apartments complex was built in 1950 and purchased by Westlake in 1976. The property is located adjacent to the Mount Sutro Forest Open Space Reserve near the intersection of 5th Avenue and Kirkham Street in the Inner Sunset District and includes 86 apartment units that are subject to the City's Rent Control Ordinance. The current buildings and site were designed around the car as the primary mode of transport, and therefore access to the site and the buildings is difficult for pedestrians and anyone with mobility issues or other disabilities. Westlake has maintained Kirkham Heights in good condition; however, the buildings and the site's infrastructure now require modernization to meet current standards.

**Q:** Why isn't Westlake Urban just renovating the existing buildings?

**A:**

The initial conceptual planning for the project investigated potential renovations to the existing buildings, but it became apparent quickly that incremental upgrades would not be sufficient to improve the property consistent with the most recent building and planning codes, allow residents to age safely in place, or improve the fundamental inadequacies of the infrastructure and buildings. For those reasons, we are proposing to demolish the existing buildings and build a new community that greatly improves the accessibility of the site and adds more housing units, both market-rate and affordable, to an area of the City that has attracted very little new housing development in the last decade.

**Q:** How many units are proposed and is the project within the current zoning and height limit?

**A:**

Westlake Urban is proposing to redevelop the 86-unit property, creating up to 445 new residential units. The site plan includes six building areas, each with multiple residential structures that are in compliance with San Francisco Planning Code's density and 40-foot height limit. In response to the City's Preliminary Project Assessment, Westlake redesigned the building 1 area to replace a proposed 4-story, 24-unit building with one 4-story and seven 3-story townhomes at the entrance to the project, providing a more graceful transition from the single-family homes on Fifth Avenue. The project will be built within the currently developed area (approximately 4.3 acres) of the 6.12-acre site, preserving two acres of the property's existing forest adjacent to Mount Sutro Open Space Reserve.

**Q:** How did you decide that 445 units is the appropriate density for this site?

**A.**

The property is zoned for up to 445 residential units under RM-2 zoning (1 unit per 600 square feet). Although under a Planned Unit Development (PUD) the property's zoning district allows for up to 667 residential units (1 unit per 400 square feet), this density level would require building heights above the 40-foot limit and therefore Westlake is not considering this maximum allowable density.

Westlake is applying for a PUD, which is a planning process that allows applicants to deviate from strict interpretations of certain zoning requirements in order to create an integrated development with unique and desirable characteristics for the benefit of occupants, the neighborhood, and the City as a whole.

The objective of Westlake's PUD application includes achieving certain objectives related to open space and site design. Due to the unique characteristics of our site and the proposed 5th Avenue street realignment, we are proposing deviations from specific zoning requirements such as front and rear yard setback and grade requirements for open space. However, our PUD application does not propose increasing the density above the current RM-2 zoning.

In summary, the amount of housing proposed is consistent with the zoning and height limit, and the design plan allows Westlake Urban to provide publicly accessible open space. The plan is consistent with the City's policies to promote housing development on the west side, specifically in the Inner Sunset neighborhood where only 90 units of net new housing were built in the past 10 years.

**Q:** What is the project timeline and is it subject to an Environmental Review?

**A:**

The Kirkham Project's Environmental Review process is underway. In November 2014, we submitted an Environmental Evaluation Application (EEA) to the San Francisco Planning Department, which was the first step in initiating a multi-year process to identify the proposed development's potential environmental impacts. We submitted our updated EEA to the Planning Department on June 10, 2015. The revised EEA provided an updated site plan and additional detail on open space, parking (autos, bike and loading), fire access, height, and building layout.

The City is conducting an EIR for the proposed project with the consulting firm Dudek to manage the process. The Initial Study and Notice of Preparation were published on March 8, 2017, which announced the Public Scoping Meeting on March 30, 2017. The City mailed a notice about the public scoping meeting to residents and owners who reside within 300 feet of the project site and others who have expressed interest in the proposed project's EIR, in addition to an email notification to individuals on the Kirkham Project website mailing list. We sent out a separate email notification to Kirkham Heights residents. At the Public Scoping meeting, the City will record comments and questions and provide follow up responses in the EIR. Throughout the multi-year review process, there will be numerous opportunities for public review and comment. The Initial Study is available as a download on the Kirkham Project website Project page: <http://thekirkhamproject.com/project/>

An update to our Conditional Use application for a Planned Unit Development (original submission October 22, 2015) was submitted to the Planning Department on May 6, 2016. The updated submission provides more technical information about the site plan including details about building heights (consistent with planning code regulations). The Conditional Use application update is available as a download on the Project page on our website at <http://thekirkhamproject.com/project/>.

**Q:** How is the 40-foot height limit calculated for this site?

**A:**

The San Francisco Planning Code measures height from the base of a building, with provisions for uphill and downhill slopes and front door stoops and prescribes incremental stepping based on the slope of the street. In compliance with the Planning Code's height restrictions, Westlake's design team is proposing 40-foot buildings that are placed on terraces up the hill with elevator shaft connections between the buildings. The updated Conditional Use Application includes detailed height analyses for the project as a whole and each of the buildings, in addition to sections of the City of San Francisco Planning Code to further explain the height calculations for the project site (see pages 58-67 of Westlake's 5/6/16 CU Update).

**Q:** How many rent controlled units will be included in the new project, and how will the rent control provisions in the new project be enforced?

**A:**

The proposed plan includes on-site replacement of the existing 86 rent controlled units. Westlake will submit an application for a Development Agreement, a binding legal contract that will include the obligation to replace the existing 86 rent controlled units with 86 new rent controlled units. The Development Agreement will also include the terms granting the existing residents the right to return to the rent controlled units in the new project at the same rents paid prior to redevelopment of the project and increased only by the annual general increases permitted by the San Francisco Rent Ordinance, in addition to payment for relocation expenses and other provisions. The specific conditions, agreements, requirements and obligations for the proposed project will be determined by the City at the time of project approval. Development Agreements are binding, recorded agreements that restrict the property regardless of ownership. Once approved, a Development Agreement may not be amended without approval by the Board of Supervisors. Throughout the redevelopment process, Westlake will comply with all requirements of the San Francisco Rent Control ordinance and other applicable San Francisco laws and agreements.

**Q:** Will the rent controlled units remain permanently under rent control?

**A.**

Westlake is proposing that all 86 replacement rent controlled units remain permanently subject to the San Francisco Rent Control Ordinance. Per the Rent Control Ordinance, when a rent controlled unit is vacated the landlord is permitted to lease that unit at market rent, but the unit will remain subject to all applicable rent control regulations including limits on future rent increases as determined by the Rent Board.

**Q:** Will the project feature below market rate housing?

**A:**

The proposed project will comply with the City of San Francisco's Inclusionary Housing Program, which was recently amended through the passage of Proposition C on the June 2016 ballot. Based on filing the project's Environmental Evaluation Application in November 2014 with the City Planning Department, the Kirkham Project's below market rate housing requirement is 13.5%. The current plan is to build the BMR inclusionary rental units on-site.

**Q:** How will this project impact existing residents of Kirkham Heights Apartments?

**A:**

While the planning process is proceeding, Westlake will continue maintaining the units and

property in good condition and providing all of the services currently available to residents. No demolition or new development activity can occur on the property until completion of the EIR and approval of the project by the San Francisco Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. Westlake is not asking residents to make plans or commitments of any kind at this time.

While it is too early in the process to provide exact details, Westlake's goal is to minimize the impact to residents during construction to the extent reasonably possible. Westlake will assist residents with temporary relocation during the construction period and will comply with the requirements of the San Francisco Rent Control Ordinance and other applicable San Francisco laws and agreements.

**Q:** What will be the unit mix?

**A:**

Westlake's plan is to include a mix of studio, one-bedroom, two-bedroom and three-bedroom units. The plan is to offer most of the units as rental apartments; however, the development team is also evaluating townhomes and/or condominiums for homeownership.

**Q:** What will the design look like?

**A:**

Initial site plan perspectives and building renderings are available on the project website: <http://thekirkhamproject.com/project/>. The site plan highlights the building size and locations, roads and streetscape, open space and landscaped areas, parking, emergency vehicle access, and accessibility, among other details. The project architect is anticipated to commence schematic building designs in the spring of 2017 and will share updated perspectives as they are available.

Kirkham Heights' unique size, location and proximity to transit and UCSF inspire a new vision and application of state-of-the-art urban design strategies. The proposed plan will connect the residential living spaces with the surrounding environment, preserve the current on-site forest area, create new pedestrian walking paths, improve access with new open plazas and widened sidewalks, and add new stairways that reflect the vibrant character of San Francisco hillside districts.

**Q:** Will additional capacity be provided for the N-Judah?

**A:**

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) has several major improvement projects for the Inner Sunset transit area planned, including the city-wide

procurement of 175 new transit trains that will start arriving in 2016, more than doubling its fleet of light rail vehicles by 2020. SF Muni will deploy one of the first three new three-car trains to the N-Judah line in the fall of 2017. The SFMTA has also identified the N-Judah corridor as part of its Rapid Network, which builds priority lanes and creates better boarding zones to allow transit to move more efficiently on the streets. Other proposed improvement efforts include streetscape changes on Irving Street, intended to improve transit performance and pedestrian safety. Transit-related impacts of the proposed project will be included in the Environmental Impact Report.

**Q:** Will the new project provide parking?

**A:**

Given the property's close proximity to public transit and in support of the City's Transit-First policy, the proposed plan includes approximately 252 parking spaces. The development team is also evaluating programs to support a variety of transit modes such as a car share program, electric bike and scooter share, bicycle/scooter storage and repair space, and various levels of delivery services for residents.

Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates has been retained by Westlake to develop an innovative array of strategies that would reduce the need for parking and reduce auto trips to and from the site, while minimizing traffic and parking impacts in the neighborhood.

Nelson\Nygaard has extensive experience achieving broader community goals of mobility, equity, economic development, and healthy living. Their experience will be critically important in achieving a project design that connects the residents, neighborhood, retail merchants, and the surrounding open space environment.

**Q:** Will the new project provide bike parking?

**A:**

The proposed project would include indoor bicycle parking rooms in every building for a total of 445 bicycle parking spaces and 24 outdoor bicycle parking spaces adjacent to the buildings.

**Q:** What is the City's response to your proposal?

**A:**

On January 14, 2015, the San Francisco Planning Department provided a response to Westlake's Preliminary Project Assessment application submitted on October 15, 2014. The assessment outlines in detail the areas of study required for an environmental review, lists required planning approvals, reviews the neighborhood notifications and

public outreach process, and provides preliminary project and design comments. The City commented, “This is a key development site for the Western side of San Francisco and an ideal site for new housing . . . in keeping with numerous objectives and policies within the Housing Element of the San Francisco General Plan.” The response also included recommendations for further study on a range of technical issues including open space, streetscape improvements, unit mix, geotechnical, and transportation. The City’s response can be viewed on our project website on the “Project” tab or on the Planning Department’s website.

**Q:** Will emergency responders be able to get to these homes?

**A:**

The proposed site plan and streetscape plan provides a balanced approach that incorporates the principles of the Better Streets Plan while adhering to the requirements of the San Francisco Fire Department (SFFD) for a 26-foot roadway width on 5th Avenue. The development team is working closely with SFFD on site and building enhancements for fire life safety and fire department vehicle and building access, in addition to type of construction.

**Q.** What is your construction timeline?

**A.**

Construction of the buildings would occur over the course of approximately 30 months expected to start in early 2019 and ending in early 2022.

**Q:** What is your construction management plan?

**A:**

The City of San Francisco requires strict procedures to mitigate construction impacts on the adjacent neighbors, including controlling dust during excavation and limiting construction activities to approved hours. Westlake will incorporate input from neighbors during the environmental review process to formulate a customized construction management plan with respect to traffic, noise and dust control. These construction management details are determined during the environmental review process. In addition, the development team is currently evaluating on-site materials re-use as a strategy to reduce trucking, noise and dust on site.

**Q:** What is the amount of excavation and off-haul in the current plan?

**A.**

The proposed plan currently requires excavation of approximately 69,000 cubic yards of soil. The next export volume would be approximately 53,000 cubic yards, with approximately 16,000 cubic yards of soil reuse at the site for grading, not including

additional soil that may be reused as construction materials. The excavation is necessary primarily for building the proposed subterranean parking garages and creating relatively flat areas for improved fire life safety and fire department vehicle and building access, in addition to accessibility for people with mobility constraints and open space.

**Q:** Have you done geotechnical studies to analyze impacts and ensure the stability of the hillside?

**A:**

The Kirkham Project's geologist, conducted a Geotechnical Investigation to analyze the property's slope stability for existing static and "pseudo-static" condition for modelling the site-specific effects of earthquake loading. The procedures and methods of the investigation are consistent with the California Geological Survey Special Publication 117, as documented in the [Environmental Impact Report Initial Study](#), which describes the methodology. The Initial Study documents that the investigation's results, combined with review of published geographic maps, aerial photographs, and site reconnaissance, indicate that the risks for both static landslides and seismically induced landslides are very low. However, the full EIR will further evaluate the potential for the proposed project to expose people or structures to potential impacts due to landslides and may identify appropriate mitigation measures to reduce these impacts, as required.

**Q:** What are your plans for communicating with the community?

**A:**

The development team will host community and resident meetings throughout the planning and entitlement process. Between the PPA submission to the City in October 2014 and through the present, the development team hosted twelve Kirkham Heights Apartments resident meetings and two "Meet & Greets" with the broader community. In addition, the team has presented the plan to SPUR, the San Francisco Housing Action Coalition (SFHAC), UCSF and the Sunset Heights Association of Responsible People (SHARP) and is available to present the plan and meet with interested community organizations. The development team will also respond to individual questions submitted on the Kirkham Project website. This FAQ is posted on the website and will be updated as needed. More formal presentations and Q&A format meetings will be provided during the environmental review process.

**Q:** Who is the developer?

**A:**

Westlake Urban is a family-owned company that has owned and managed Kirkham Heights for 40 years. Westlake Urban is working on the property's redevelopment with Alpha Group, a socially and environmentally responsible urban revitalization management company. Alpha's role in the project includes leading the design and



engineering team, managing the entitlement process, overseeing community outreach and communications, and formulating sustainability and resiliency strategies for a healthy urban neighborhood. The development team is predominantly women-led from local firms including Van Meter Williams Pollack architects; GLS Landscape architects; Goldfarb and Lipman housing attorneys; Coblenz, Patch, Duffy & Bass land use attorneys; Nelson Nygaard transportation planning; and Berg Davis Public Affairs, among other professionals. Several members of the development team have resided in or near the Inner Sunset neighborhood and contributed to neighborhood improvement projects for decades.

**Q:** What is the development team's vision for the Kirkham Project?

**A:**

The development team's priorities include respectful care for the existing residents during temporary off-site relocation and permanent on-site occupancy, a mix of market and below market rate units, transportation and service options, delightful outdoor areas for both social life and quietude options, and long term integrity. The Kirkham Project development vision is to create a new multifamily housing community that is adaptable for the dramatic social and environmental changes we anticipate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, while fostering an enduring village culture that addresses the need for connection, security and quality of life. The project renderings on the website ([www.thekirkhamproject.com/project](http://www.thekirkhamproject.com/project)) attempt to paint visual icons of this future vision for a connected community.

**Q:** Could the development include retail and other commercial uses?

**A:**

The property's current zoning designation does not permit retail or other commercial uses on the property.

**Q:** Where can I get more information?

**A:**

If you have questions, please email us at [share@thekirkhamproject.com](mailto:share@thekirkhamproject.com). Please also visit our website at [www.thekirkhamproject.com](http://www.thekirkhamproject.com).

*The final development plans will be determined through a public, City approval process; therefore, the final development details are subject to change from the proposed plans described above.*