

Section 4.2.1 Narrative Description

The New Genesis Apartments will provide new, attractive, safe, comfortable, and affordable housing for extremely low-income individuals, most of them formerly homeless with special needs. Fundamental to the New Genesis Apartment's design is a commitment by Skid Row Housing Trust (the "Trust") to enhance the surrounding neighborhood. The building validates this commitment through its innovative design. The following narrative outlines the project's physical program.

Structure

The project site is located on two parcels near the corner of 5th Street and Main Street in Downtown Los Angeles. Together, the sites comprise 16,855 square feet, or roughly .39 acres. The first parcel is occupied the Genesis Hotel, a 2-story, 14,000 square foot SRO Hotel owned and operated by the Trust. The Trust intends to demolish this building and combine it with the second parcel, a 9,855 square foot surface parking lot.

The New Genesis Apartments will be a six story wood frame structure over a concrete podium and one level of subterranean parking. The new building will contain 106 residential units (including 2 manager's units) supportive service offices, commercial space, and ample community space.

Over the last several years, downtown Los Angeles has undergone a renaissance, resulting in dramatic commercial and residential redevelopment. More recently, that redevelopment has spilled over to downtown's Historic Bank District, where the Genesis will be located. Adaptive reuse of former office buildings is creating thousands of market rate housing units, often enlivening the streets on which they front. In this rapidly changing community, the future place of low-income people remains an unanswered question, making it vital that the New Genesis Apartments be an active participant in this process. To this end, the design – in its form, organization, and composition – provides a truly participatory building that anticipates the vibrant urban neighborhood to come.

The New Genesis Apartments will be composed of six stories of residential housing and public spaces above a ground floor podium containing the main lobby, roughly 2,400 square feet of commercial space, administrative support spaces, social service offices, an expansive courtyard and a community room. Above the ground floor, the residential units are arranged around a centralized courtyard open to the sky. This arrangement allows for natural ventilation and light to enter nearly every unit. The primary pedestrian entrance will be off Main Street, while the main vehicular entrance will be off Werdin Place, an alley to the rear of the site. As proposed, the project will contain parking spaces for staff, patrons of the commercial space, and one spot for each of the building's units restricted above 50% AMI (per zoning code). Both entries bring the resident or visitor directly into the courtyard, the principal contact point for building management and tenant security. From the courtyard, one can proceed to the service

intake area (service coordinators offices), the meeting room and property management offices, or via the adjacent stairs/elevator, to the apartments located on the upper floors.

Unit Mix and Amenities

The New Genesis Apartments will provide 98 efficiency units and 6 one-bedroom loft style units for very low and low-income tenants, and two one-bedroom loft style units for the assistant manager and manager. The efficiency units have been designed for independent living. Amenities such as full private bathrooms and kitchenettes provide comfortable individual living quarters. The kitchenettes are equipped with a sink, refrigerator, a stove or microwave, cabinets, and counter space. Each unit will be furnished with a bed, nightstand, wardrobe/dresser, chairs and window treatments. All units will include wiring for cable/dish television, high speed internet access, and telephones.

The New Genesis Apartments provides a variety of open and community spaces for tenants to enjoy. On the ground floor, the community kitchen and attached community room are located in close proximity to the primary courtyard and two additional open spaces, which will serve as the primary outdoor communal space for residents. The courtyard spaces will feature drought tolerant landscaping which minimizes water expenditure while providing safe, attractive spaces for the tenants. Also on the ground floor, the tenants will have access to a full laundry room which branches off of the courtyard in order to activate the communal space. In addition, floors 2-6 will provide perimeter walkways which, on Main Street, will be wide enough to accommodate tables and chairs.

Security

Both the pedestrian and the vehicular entries will be gated to secure tenants' and staff's entry into the building. The ground floor lobby will be secured by an intercom/buzzer-controlled door that can be opened only by a resident with a key card or by the property management staff. The tenants will have key cards that allow the manager to monitor access in and around the building. Tenants' rooms will lock securely, and all visitors will be required to register and provide photo identification before entering the building. Cameras are used sparingly out of privacy concerns but will be located near any potential access point not within sight of the main desk.

Suitability of Housing to Population's Needs

The project will offer access to a comprehensive array of supportive services. On-site case managers will utilize private office spaces to meet with residents while the meeting room and community room will be used for larger gatherings, such as support group meetings. In addition to case management, local service organizations will occupy the premises on a weekly basis to offer services.

All communal space has been designed to encourage social interaction with other tenants, which is an important goal in increasing social skills for individuals with special needs. The proposed designs of the common rooms and the courtyard, as well as the presence of on-site management and the provision of supportive services, are intended

to create opportunities for social interaction, and to foster a sense of community inside the building. At the same time, comfortably sized private living quarters with individual amenities promote a sense of entitlement to privacy and separate identity. This combination of private and communal living spaces has proven effective in supporting residents' efforts to stabilize their lives.

Accessibility

The New Genesis Apartments project will comply with all applicable housing regulations, including fire and earthquake safety codes and Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA") guidelines for fair housing. Accordingly, all public areas will be fully handicapped accessible and several units will be designed to accommodate those who are physically disabled. All other units will be ADA convertible. Electric outlets, switches, and finish hardware will meet ADA standards. A fully accessible handicap elevator—serving all floors—will be installed.

Energy Efficiency

Another major priority was sustainable design. The design and construction materials will provide both low maintenance and durability. As in all of its developments, the Trust will make every effort to promote energy efficiency and conservation in the New Genesis Apartments project. In addition to the 'passive' design strategies employed which shaped the building's organization, overall the project will exceed Title 24 energy efficiency standards by at least fifteen percent. Energy –and resource – efficient measures will be used as appropriate, including energy star rated appliances and the use of formaldehyde-free insulation.

Identity

Through its distinctive form and organization, the New Genesis Apartments will create a singular, recognizable identity both within the community and larger urban context. The New Genesis Apartments succeeds in its mission to create satisfying living accommodations for people who are often shunted into anonymous, leftover spaces in the City. Its completion will reinforce Skid Row Housing Trust's reputation as a developer of projects with ambitious social and architectural aspirations – projects that provide high-quality and innovative affordable housing that make people feel proud about where they live.