SUMMARY

This is a request to modify a previously approved multi-family residential project (AR 09-15) to allow an additional 40 units, totaling 152 apartment units on a 13.26-acre site located on the north side of Nord Highway adjacent to Mud Creek. The project site is currently undeveloped, and the project would result in a density of 11.46 units per acre. No major issues have been identified.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Architectural Review and Historic Preservation Board adopt the required findings contained in the agenda report and approve the proposed project, subject to the recommended conditions.

Proposed Motion

I move that the Architectural Review and Historic Preservation Board adopt the required findings contained in the agenda report and approve Architectural Review 19-14 (Heritage Landing Apartments), subject to the recommended conditions therein.

BACKGROUND

The project site is located within the Northwest Chico Specific Plan (NWCSP) area, on the north side of Nord Highway on undeveloped property that extends east of the Mud Creek corridor (see Location Map, Attachment A). The 13.26-acre site extends to the centerline of Mud Creek which is impounded by a levee that arcs across the westerly edge of the eight-acre developable portion of the site (see Site Plan, Attachment B). The site is designated Medium Density Residential on the General Plan diagram and zoned R2-AOD (Medium Density Residential with Airport Overflight Zone D Overlay).

Land uses to the east include single-family residential along Nord Highway and a mobile home park accessed from Esplanade. Lands to the south across Nord Highway are steadily being developed pursuant to approved single-family residential subdivisions. Orchards outside the City limits are located across the Mud Creek corridor over 300 feet to the west and north.

DISCUSSION
Site Design

The project consists of three 8-unit, two 12-unit, two 16-unit and three 24-unit apartment buildings, for a total of ten new apartment buildings containing 152 multi-family residential units. Of these units, 48 would have one bedroom, 100 would have two bedrooms, and 4 units would have three bedrooms, for a total of 260 bedrooms. The buildings fronting Nord Highway (Buildings #1-3) and adjacent to the proposed clubhouse (Buildings #8-10) would be two-story structures, and Buildings #4-7 adjacent to Mud Creek would be three-story structures. The three-story buildings would provide each level with 9’1” interior ceilings; gable roof features would extend to a total finished height of 39 feet, 4 inches, consistent with the allowed projections into height limits contained in CMC Section 19.60.070. Central to the site would be a recreational area and facilities including a clubhouse, restrooms, pool and spa, bocce court and picnic area.

Primary access would be provided by an entrance drive from Nord Highway located opposite a future street extending south (Chamberlain Run). Curved monument signs with the project name and address would flank either side of the entrance drive. Proposed project signage will be permitted through a separate sign permit in compliance with CMC 19.74 (Signs). Access to the interior of the site would be controlled by swing gates and a guest call box. Tenants would have remotes to open the vehicle gates and the pedestrian gates would be key-fob activated.

Secondary access would be provided for emergency response only, via a gated entry located at the western corner of the site. The entrance drives would connect to a loop drive aisle providing access to 310 off-street parking spaces, of which 152 are covered carport spaces, 54 garage stall spaces, 73 standard open spaces and 31 compact spaces. Additionally, a total of eight ADA parking spaces would be provided onsite. The site plan also notes 153 bicycle parking spaces situated throughout the site, clustered between building entrances and the nearest vehicle parking spaces (see Landscape Site Plan, Attachment C).

The buildings proposed along the Nord Highway frontage would physically separate the off-street parking from the public right of way and paved pedestrian paths would provide walkable access around each building, connecting front, side and rear building entrances directly to the public street. Six-foot redwood “good neighbor” fencing is proposed or existing fencing would be retained along portions of the easterly property line abutting residential areas, and the remainder of the perimeter would have six-foot metal picket fencing and gates. The site plan includes a detail for 6-foot wire mesh fencing, but no fencing of that type is indicated on the site plan or landscape plan.

Proposed exterior lighting includes lantern style wall sconces at apartment entrances and patios; basic downlighting fixtures to illuminate stairways, building numbers, and garages. Parking areas would be lit by full-cutoff shoe box-type luminaries attached to 12-foot poles mounted on a two-foot concrete base, for a finished height of 14 feet; all lighting would be contained onsite (see Lighting, Attachment D).

A total of five trash receptacles in architecturally compatible materials would be provided. Additionally, a trash compactor has been incorporated into the project which will compact trash onsite to minimize waste. Utility meters and condenser units adjacent to the buildings would be screened by a wood-framed lattice wall with cap rail, and other appurtenances would be
screened by landscape vegetation.

**Landscaping Design**

Proposed new parking lot shade trees include Japanese Zelkova, evergreen Elm and cork Oak. Chinese pistache and autumn Purple Ash trees would be planted along Nord Highway and strawberry trees along the Mud Creek corridor. A variety of accent trees are proposed around the buildings and along walkways including crape myrtle, dogwood, Japanese maple and red maple (see Landscape Planting Plan, **Attachment E**). Parking area shading is calculated to meet 54 percent, and a total of eight percent of the parking area would be landscaped. A wide variety of shrubs and groundcover, with various water use demands, are proposed.

**Architectural Design**

The project would feature two and three-story units with a bungalow-agrarian architectural design. External stairways provide access to the upper units. Stacked covered porches and varied roof forms help to break up the massing and provide building articulation. Building materials include plaster walls with an earth-tone palette that would be alternated for each building. Flat, slate-style concrete roof tiles are proposed. The building design would be accented by stone veneer for the base finish and cobalt tile niches to enhance the exterior appeal. A typical color elevation and material references for the proposed buildings are provided as **Attachment F**.

A large entryway with ample glazing defines the clubhouse building, which will contain management offices, party facilities, a fitness room, and exterior mailboxes. The proposed six-car garages would match the main buildings in terms of colors and materials and would have central gable features on the front and back with hip roof ends (see Garage Details, **Attachment G**). The garages would provide individual bays with separate single-car doors for each vehicle space. Carports would be metal, T-shaped in profile view, and would be painted to match the project color scheme.

**ANALYSIS**

As mentioned, the Heritage Landing Apartments project (AR 09-15) originally proposed 112 multi-family residential units and was approved by the Board in 2009. The project has since been modified to include an additional 40 units, for a total of 152 multi-family residential units. For comparison, the site plan previously approved under AR 09-15 has been included as **Attachment H** of this report. The list below summarizes other changes to the project design and layout.

- Number of proposed new apartment buildings increased from 7 to 10. Total bedroom count increased from 178 to 260.
- Massing of the original site design was reduced and diversified. Proposal modified from seven 16-unit buildings to three 8-unit, two 12-unit, two 16-unit and three 24-unit apartment buildings.
- Stone veneer and tile niches added to the building exterior to enhance architectural appeal.
• Two color options have been proposed for the buildings, rather than a single scheme.
• The perimeter fence was moved away from the buildings to allow for pedestrian pathways around buildings and more usable open space areas.
• The oversized vehicle parking and storage area previously proposed at the northeastern corner of the site has been removed and replaced with additional parking.
• The 8-foot pedestrian/bicycle path along the toe of the levee has been eliminated; all private improvements are now proposed within the fenced perimeter.
• The proposed parking lot shading has been increased from 51-percent to 54-percent. Similarly, the parking area landscaping has been increased from 5-percent to 8-percent.
• The number of trash enclosures has been increased from 3 to 5. Additionally, a trash compactor has been incorporated into the project which will compact trash onsite and minimize waste disposal trips.
• A maintenance building has been added onsite.
• Garage structures have been added along the Eastern perimeter to provide privacy between Heritage Landing Apartments and the neighboring property.

**Consistency with Design Guidelines Manual**

The modified design intent is to provide a unique residential project that fits within the context of the site and community (DG 1.2.11, 1.2.12). Onsite pedestrian paths provide access around all sides of the buildings as well as near the easement along the levee, consistent with Design Guidelines (DGs) 1.1.13, 4.1.11, 4.1.35, and 4.1.41, which encourage a pedestrian-oriented design. Ground floor patios with low roof elements placed at various points along Nord Highway to provide pedestrian scale and “eyes on the street” engagement with the public (DG 4.1.11, 4.1.13, 4.1.24). The project would include a shared outdoor recreational area with a pool and spa, formal and casual vista points, tot lot and indoor amenities such as a clubhouse and fitness center, consistent with Design Guidelines that call for incorporating common open space and shared amenities into the project (DG 1.1.42, 4.1.42, 4.1.43, 4.1.45).

The design incorporates varied roof forms, alternative color schemes, plane undulation and an attractive mix of materials, textures and four-sided architectural treatment promoting visual interest and reducing the massing of each building (DG 4.2.11, 4.2.13, 4.2.22, 4.2.31). Appropriate lighting for common open space areas, including walkways, carports and building entrances would enhance a safe environment while not creating unnecessary glare impacts to residents or adjacent properties (DG 4.1.44). Utilities would be screened from public view by landscape screening or mesh panels (DG 3.1.35, 3.2.28).

**Design Guidance in NWSCP**

There are three design guidance policies for multi-family residential projects specified in the NWSCP. They are:

1. Building entries should directly access a public street;
2. Parking shall not be located between the buildings and the street; and
3. Large buildings should be broken into smaller components that provide a fine-grained
scale and fit the context of residential neighborhoods and streets.

The proposal responds to these criteria by providing walkways from the unit entrances along Nord Highway directly to the public street, locating buildings between the parking area and the street, and by including multiple gable features on each residential building. The site design provides a centralized open space and recreational area that will serve as a valuable amenity for the future tenants, and the trail along the toe of the levee will benefit the community at large, particularly when the trail is connected throughout the NWCSP area and beyond.

The project appears to meet all quantitative zoning standards, including vehicle parking, bicycle parking, lot coverage, building height, and setbacks. The project generally complies with the City’s Design Manual and the Design Guidance in the NWCSP for multi-family residential, and staff has no major concerns with the overall project concept.

REQUIRED FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL

Environmental Review

The project site is located within the boundary of the NWCSP, for which an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared and certified by the Chico City Council in 2006. Pursuant to Sections 15162 (Subsequent EIRs and Negative Declarations), 15168 (Program EIRs), and 15182 (Residential Projects Pursuant to a Specific Plan) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, this project has been examined with respect to the NWCSP and has been found to be within the scope of the previously-adopted EIR. No new significant effects are anticipated, and no new mitigation measures are warranted as a result of the project that were not previously identified in the Plan EIR. As a result, no further environmental review is required. Copies of the NWCSP EIR are available in the Planning Services office for review.

Site Design and Architectural Review

According to the Chico Municipal Code Section 19.18.060, the Architectural Review and Historic Preservation Board shall determine whether or not a project adequately meets adopted City standards and design guidelines, based upon the following findings:

1. The proposed development is consistent with the General Plan, any applicable specific plan, and any applicable neighborhood or area plans.

   The project would result in a gross density of approximately 11.46 units per acre, which falls within the allowable density range for the R2 zoning district and Medium Density Residential General Plan designation (7.01 - 14 units per acre). The project has been conditioned to ensure consistency with General Plan policies and applicable design guidelines. The project complies with the design guidance in the NWCSP for multi-family residential construction, including building orientation, parking location, and building articulation. The NWCSP was previously found to be consistent with the General Plan.

   The project is consistent with several General Plan goals and policies, including those that encourage compatible infill development (LU-1, LU-4, and CD-5) and providing adequate supply of rental housing to meet a wide range of renters and future needs throughout the city (H.3, H.3.2, and H.3.4). The design is also consistent with policies
that call for a strong pedestrian orientation by promoting interactions among tenants with exposed porches/patios and including color schemes and architectural elements that will lend way-finding amongst the buildings (CD-3.2 and CIRC-4).

2. **The proposed development, including the character, scale, and quality of design are consistent with the purpose/intent of this chapter and any adopted design guidelines.**

The purpose and intent of CMC 19.18 (Site Design and Architectural Review) is to promote the general health, safety, welfare and economy of residents in the community through orderly harmonious development, enhancing the desirability of residence or investment in the City and to promote visual environments that are of high aesthetic quality and variety. The proposed buildings are of a size and scale that does not overwhelm the surrounding neighborhood. The design incorporates a variety of techniques to promote visual interest and reduce the massing of each building (DG 4.2.11, 4.2.13, 4.2.22, 4.2.31). Furthermore, the project is consistent with the development standards for the R2 zoning district contained in CMC Section 19.42.030 including building height, setbacks and lot coverage. Overall, the proposed project is consistent with the purpose and intent of CMC 19.18.

The proposed multi-family project is consistent with existing and proposed uses in the area, including single-family residential, multi-family residential, and neighborhood commercial uses. The scale of the proposal is compatible with the site, neighborhood context, and the vision of the NWCSP design guidelines.

3. **The architectural design of structures and their materials and colors are visually compatible with surrounding development. Design elements, including screening of equipment, exterior lighting, signs, and awnings, have been incorporated into the project to further ensure its compatibility with the character and uses of adjacent development.**

The architecture would be visually compatible with the site and surrounding development, which includes a variety of land uses. Lighting will be full cutoff fixtures, adequate landscaped buffers are provided, and all equipment is screened by structural elements or landscaping to minimize its appearance. While the earth tone color palette consists of rich colors that will result in an attractive paint scheme for any one building, repeating the exact same scheme on every building throughout the project may appear redundant. Therefore, the project proposes two color options, which will be alternated throughout the design.

4. **The location and configuration of structures are compatible with their sites and with surrounding sites and structures, and do not unnecessarily block views from other structures or dominate their surroundings.**

The layout is generally compatible with the site and will create a variety of private, semi-private, and public spaces for the residents of the apartment complex. The site design provides a centralized open space and recreational area that will serve as a valuable amenity for the future tenants. Two-story structures would interface with Nord Highway and three-story buildings would be constructed along the western boundary of the site adjacent to Mud Creek. The proposal is in compliance with the maximum height and
site coverage allowances for main buildings in the R2 zoning district pursuant to CMC Section 19.42.030. The structures will not unnecessarily block views or dominate their surroundings.

5. The general landscape design, including the color, location, size, texture, type, and coverage of plant materials, and provisions for irrigation and maintenance, and protection of landscape elements, have been considered to ensure visual relief, to complement structures, and to provide an attractive environment.

The landscaping will provide an attractive outdoor environment, and contain sufficient variation in colors, forms, and texture to complement the development and provide visual relief. Additionally, proposed parking lot landscaping (eight percent) and shading (54 percent) comply with the standards set forth in CMC 19.70.060.

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

1. All approved building plans and permits shall note on the cover sheet that the project shall comply with AR 19-14 (Heritage Landing). No building permits related to this approval shall be finaled without authorization of Planning staff.

2. The proposed landscape plan may be modified as necessary to comply with Low Impact Development (LID) requirements, as promulgated under Chico Municipal Code Section 15.50.

3. All wall-mounted utilities and roof or wall penetrations, including vent stacks, utility boxes, exhaust vents, gas meters and similar equipment, shall be screened by appropriate materials and colors. Adequate screening shall be verified by planning staff prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy.

4. All new electric, telephone, and other wiring conduits for utilities shall be placed underground in compliance with CMC 19.60.120.

5. Proposed project signage shall be permitted through a separate sign permit in compliance with CMC 19.74 (Signs).

6. As required by CMC 16.66, trees removed shall be replaced as follows:
   a. On-site. For every six inches in DBH removed, a new 15-gallon tree shall be planted on-site. Replacement trees shall be of similar species, unless otherwise approved by the urban forest manager, and shall be placed in areas dedicated for date of planting and shall be verified by the applicant upon request by the director. If any replacement trees die or fail within the first three years of their planting, then the applicant shall pay an in-lieu fee as established by a fee schedule adopted by the City Council.
   b. Off-site. If it is not feasible or desirable to plant replacement trees on-site, payment of an in-lieu fee as established by a fee schedule adopted by the City Council shall be required.
   c. Replacement trees shall not receive credit as satisfying shade or street tree requirements otherwise mandated by the municipal code.
d. Tree removal shall be subject to the in-lieu fee payment requirements set forth by Chico Municipal Code (CMC) 16.66 and fee schedule adopted by the City Council.

e. All trees not approved for removal shall be preserved on and adjacent to the project site. A tree preservation plan, including fencing around drip lines and methods for excavation within the drip lines of protected trees to be preserved shall be prepared by the project developer pursuant to CMC 16.66.110 and 19.68.060 for review and approval by planning staff prior to any ground-disturbing activities.

7. All electronic gates shall be equipped with emergency response activation in the form of radio, strobe, siren, or other method deemed acceptable by the City Police and Fire Departments.

8. The following mitigation measures specified in the NWCSP EIR (SCH #2004082087) are applicable to this project and are hereby incorporated by reference and imposed as conditions of approval: AIR-1a, AIR-1b, BIO-5, BIO-6, BIO-7, CULT-3a, CULT-3b, GEO-1, and HYDRO-3.

PUBLIC NOTICE

A 10-day public hearing notice was mailed to all landowners and residents within 500 feet of the site, a legal notice was published in the Chico Enterprise Record and a notice was posted on the project site at least 10 days prior to this ARHPB meeting. As of the date of this report no comments have been received in response to the public notice.

ATTACHMENTS

A. Location Map
B. AR 19-14 Site Plan
C. Landscape Site Plan
D. Lighting
E. Landscape Planting Plan
F. Typical Building Elevations/colors
G. Garage & Carport Details
H. AR 09-15 Site Plan

DISTRIBUTION

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