

LA MESA

JEWEL OF THE HILLS

Project 2018-08 Alvarado Specific Plan



Project



Alvarado Specific Plan (the “Plan” - Project 2018-08)

- 7407 Alvarado Road
- Proposed Specific Plan for the development of approximately 900 dwelling units in four apartment buildings
- May include student housing and ground floor commercial uses

Vicinity Map



Background



- 12-Acre Site
- Along the South Side of Alvarado Road between 70th Street Guava Avenue
 - Bound by the 70th Street Trolley Station to the West
 - Green Line Trolley Corridor to the South
 - Car Dealership to the East
 - Alvarado Road and Interstate 8 (I-8) to the North
- Currently Operates as a Recreation Vehicle (RV) Resort Facility
- Three Billboards Exist on the Project Site
- Alvarado Creek Exists Near the Western Portion of the Site
- Current CM Zoning does not allow housing

Background



- September 2018 – Plan submitted to the City
 - Applicant was informed that a Project and CEQA consultant would be hired to assist with processing
- March 2019 – City procured consultants following proposal and contract review and approvals
- May 2019 – CEQA Scoping Meeting
- October 2019 – 1st Plan review comment letter provided to applicant
- Plan Resubmittal, February 2020
- August 2020 – 2nd Plan review comment letter provided to applicant

Background

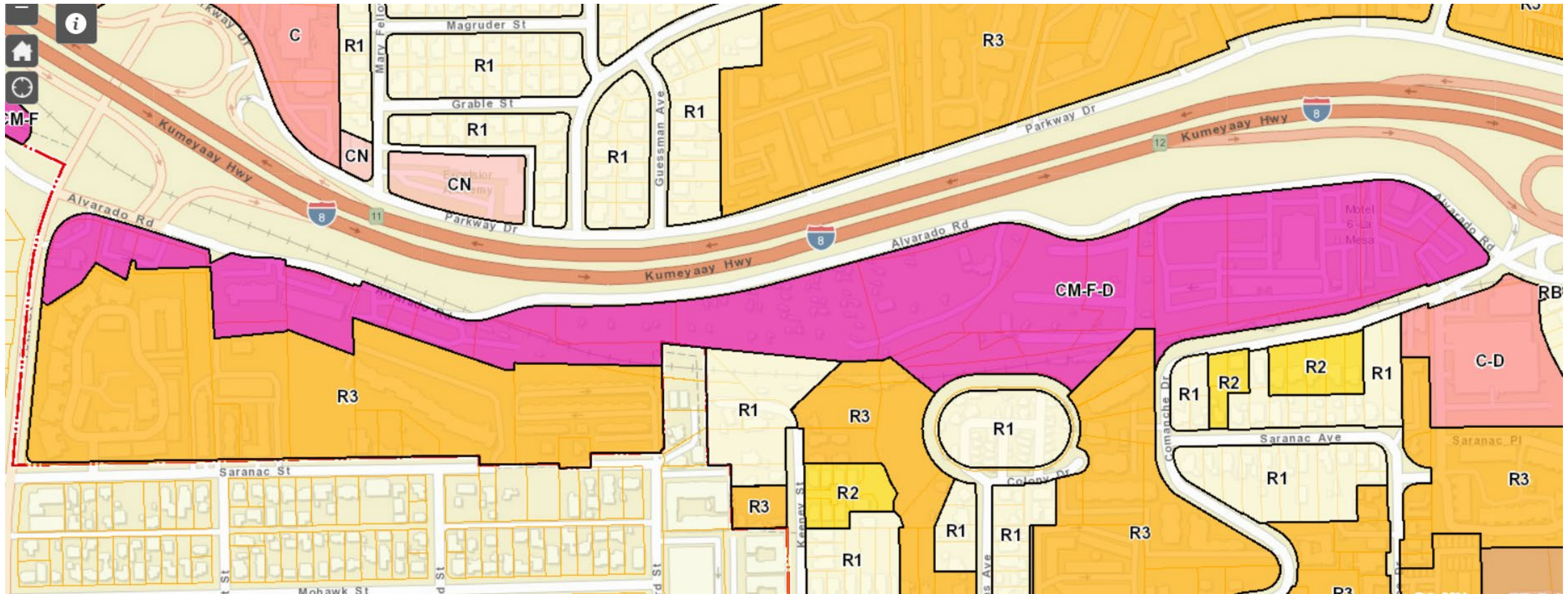


- March 2021 – Development Agreement Subcommittee formed and meeting
- December 2021 – Applicant withdrew from Development Agreement Negotiations
- June 2022 – Applicant resubmitted Design Guidelines and Development Standards for Specific Plan document
- August 2022 – Planning Commission Meeting

Zone reclassification



- Current Zone – Light Industrial and Commercial Service/Floodway/Urban Design Overlay
 - Under Current Zoning, Multi-Family Housing Is Not Permitted
- Proposed Zone – Alvarado Specific Plan Overlay
 - Underlying zoning remains the same
 - Plan as an overlay to establish Planning Goals, Policies, and Objectives, and Design Guidelines and Development Standards



Current Zoning (CM-F-D)

Description



- Alvarado Specific Plan is a Proposed Master Plan Form Based Development Concept for a Phased Transit-Oriented Development. The Plan proposes:
- 850-950 Residential Units
- May Include Ground Floor, Resident-Serving Commercial Uses
- To Be Built In 2 Project Phases
- Four Buildings
 - Up to 3-Level Parking Structures
 - Up to 5-Stories of Residential Above Parking Structures
 - Maximum Height of 85 feet
- Common open space
 - Outdoor courtyards
 - Podium Deck Areas
 - Alvarado Creek Restoration Area
- Required Improvements such as: bike lanes, utilities, street improvements





Looking West on Alvarado Road



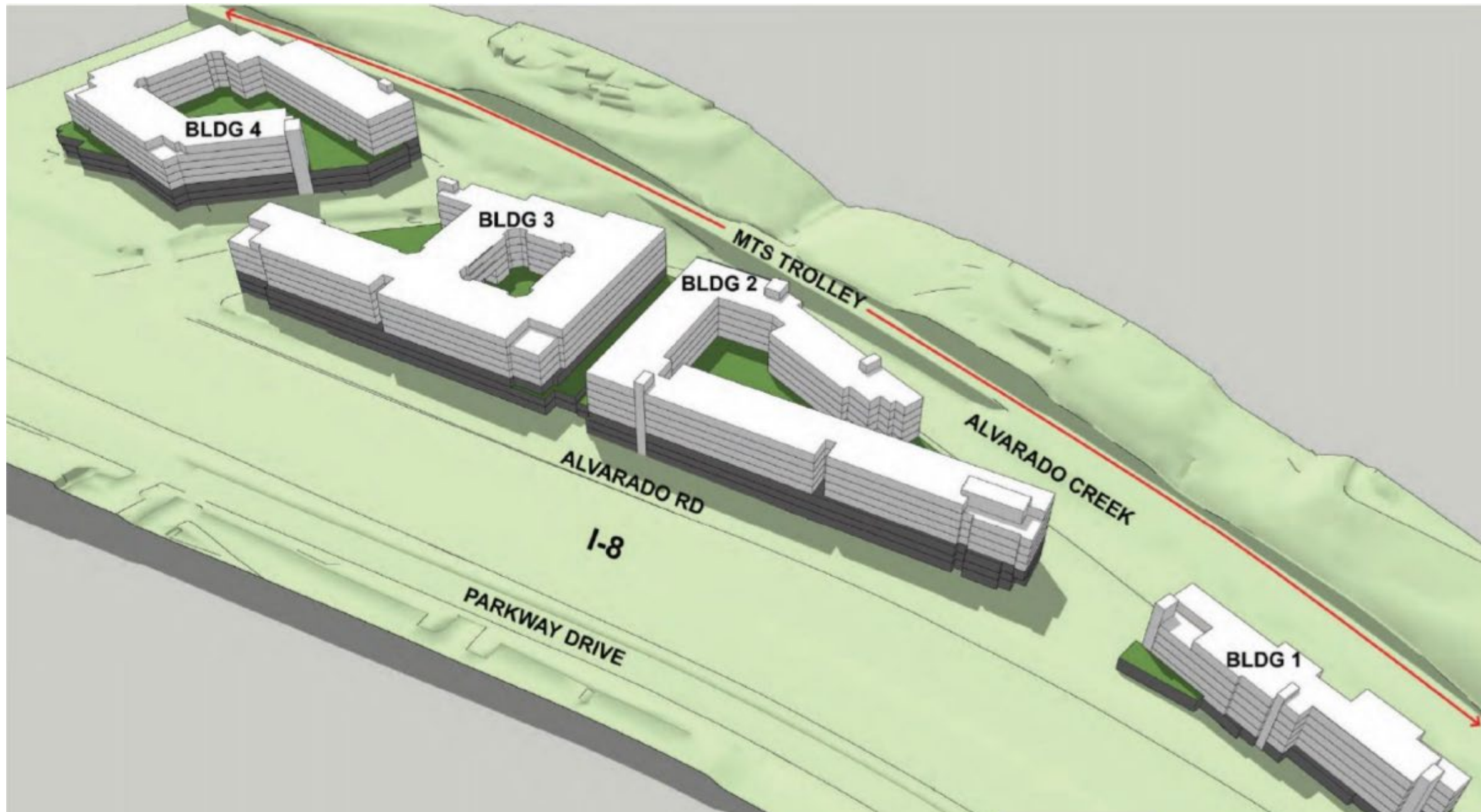
View from I-8 Eastbound



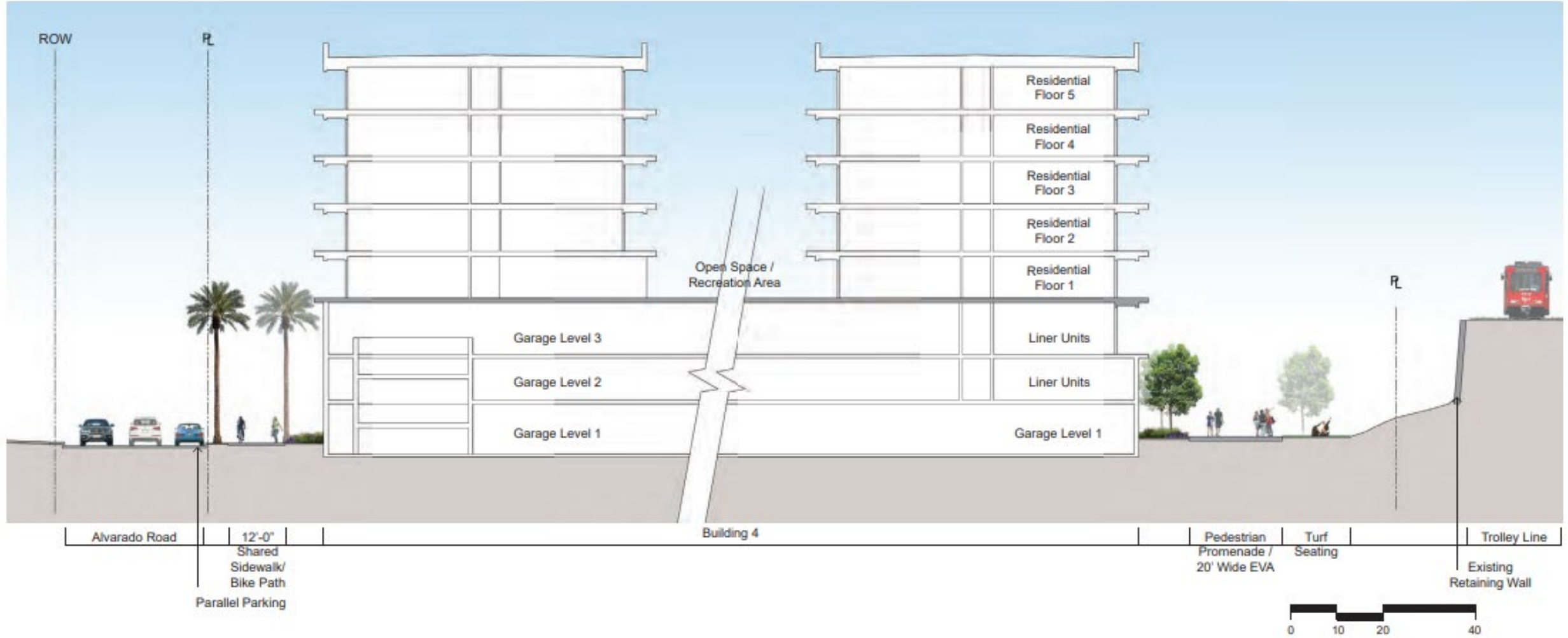
View from I-8 Westbound Looking Southwest



Looking Northwest







Issues



- Proposed Plan contains extensive background discussion, but lacks significant guidance to function in the implementation of the Plan
- Poorly organized and lacks needed detail
- Lacks suitable design guidelines and development standards
- Internally inconsistent and contradictory regarding subjective standards versus objective standards
- States intent for a Development Agreement but process discontinued by the applicant
- No Community Outreach provided beyond required noticing

General Plan Consistency



- The three large project buildings would be among the largest in the City of La Mesa.
 - Little variety to size and massing
 - No transition from the street
 - Not in context with neighborhood
- No affordable housing provided
 - General Plan encourages opportunities for affordable housing in all residential areas to support the policies and programs of the City's Housing Element
- Engagement with the community is encouraged as part of the General Plan Land Use Element and development process

General Plan Consistency



- Identified as Transit-Oriented and Mixed-Use development but no specific details relative to transit oriented incentives or ridership
- The General Plan and Urban Design Standards provide direction to emphasize attractive building and site design.
 - Give careful attention to building scale, architectural materials, landscaping, and other elements
- Building scale and form inconsistent with surroundings and existing development.
 - Adds a visually disruptive element that does not enhance the visual quality of the community

Summary of Appeal



- Planning Commission Resolution inconsistent with the Environmental Impact Report (EIR)
 - Including inconsistency with the City land use and design policies
- Challenges the Planning Commission staff report
 - Does not acknowledge the relationship of the project relative to the City's Housing Element and RHNA.
- Claims statements in the Planning Commission Resolution such as “lacks sufficient detail, standards and graphics to ensure high-quality design will be achieved...” are vague and not supported

Response to Appeal



- A Specific Plan is a legislative action
 - A legislative action is a policy action
 - A discretionary action is the consideration of an application against established standards for the construction of a project
 - Decision on Specific Plan reflects legislative and policy priorities
- Legislative and policy conclusions can vary from an environmental “assessment” document (in this case, an EIR).
- The project is not part of the Housing Element
- The Plan inaccurately portrays a level of architectural detail
 - It could mislead decision makers and the public to expect future construction to be similar to what is shown

Conclusion



- The proposed objective design standards provide insufficient guidance for design of the project and describe design
 - It is far less articulated and varied than shown in the illustrations in the Plan.
- The Plan would not provide the clear regulation and guidance desired
 - For the community,
 - For current and future property owners
 - As well as future decision makers and staff

Recommendation



Adopt a Resolution denying the appeal and sustain the Planning Commission's denial of the Alvarado Specific Plan for Project 2018-08

- *It should be noted that the proposed project is exempt from CEQA review
 - per Section 15270 which states that "CEQA does not apply to projects which a public agency rejects or disapproves"

