

Update on Development Applications

In September 2014, the property owner submitted a formal application to redevelop the site. In response to community comments, the property owner revised the project to reduce the number of residential units from 211 to 153 (approximately thirty dwelling units per acre), with 6,936 square feet of retail/office use. The proposal includes three-story townhouses on the west side. A five-story multi-family residential building (with the retail/office on the first floor) is proposed along the frontage of El Camino Real; a multi-family residential building proposed for the Fremont Avenue frontage is seven stories. A copy of the latest plans is provided in Attachment 5 of the Report to Council.

The proposed project requires rezoning for all or a portion of the property from R-3/ECR to R-4/ECR, and approval of a Special Development Permit and Vesting Tentative Map. The applications are incomplete at this time and public hearings have not yet been scheduled. The proposed project and required approvals may change as the developer continues to update their plans.

Project Plans: While the project revisions to date have been positive, staff has remaining concerns with several aspects of the latest plans, including: 1) building heights and massing of the multi-family buildings on El Camino Real and Fremont Avenue; 2) the proposed reduced front setback along El Camino Real; and 3) the proposal to remove mature Oak trees.

Building Heights and Massing: In staff's opinion, the massing of the five-story building facing El Camino Real needs to be further mitigated through a height reduction, additional wall setbacks or other architectural solutions. Additionally, the seven-story building facing Fremont Avenue does not provide an optimal step down relationship or transition with the nearby residential uses. Staff has provided suggestions to the applicant to reduce the height of the buildings to no more than four stories immediately adjacent to El Camino Real and Fremont Avenue. An additional story above four stories could be supported by staff with increased setbacks from the street to reduce the visual mass of the buildings and increase neighborhood compatibility. The applicant does not agree with staff's suggestions and has expressed interest in proceeding with the heights currently proposed.

Front Setback: A minimum fifteen-foot front setback is required for residential structures, as measured from the back of sidewalk. For non-residential portions of buildings, no front setback is currently required. The building facing Fremont Avenue complies by providing the minimum required fifteen-foot front setback. The front setback along the retail/office portion of the building facing El Camino Real is ten feet, which is in compliance. However, the front setback for the remaining residential portion of the building is deficient and ranges from eight feet two inches to eleven feet three inches. In

staff's opinion, the front setback deficiency along El Camino Real further adds to the visual bulk and massing of the building and should be increased to minimum fifteen feet.

Trees: Staff has recommended that the applicant retain as many mature trees as possible. Perhaps the most significant tree, an existing healthy Valley Oak near the center of the site will be incorporated into the project, which is a positive feature of the project. However, the applicant proposes to remove the entire row of healthy Oak trees near the corner of El Camino Real and Wolfe Road. The City Arborist has noted that the trees appear to be mates to the Oak trees across Wolfe Road within the public right-of-way, and staff recommends that the trees be retained.

Adjacent Dental Building: The property owner has indicated that he is in under contract to purchase the adjacent two-story dental building at the corner of Wolfe Road and Fremont Avenue. The parcel is not part of the proposed project at this time. If the purchase occurs, the property owner has expressed interest in relocating the existing dental office into the designated retail/office tenant space facing El Camino Real. The property owner has submitted conceptual site and landscaping plans (see Attachment 3, Sheets A.1 and L.1), showing the dental parcel to be converted into additional usable open space. With the dental parcel, the overall density of the project would slightly decrease to twenty-nine dwelling units per acre.

Project Timeline: City Council decision on the proposed development applications would occur after the EIR has been certified (anticipated in March 2016) and after annexation is completed.