

Special Development Permit Findings

In order to approve the Special Development Permit, the Planning Commission and City Council must make one of the following findings:

1. The proposed use attains the objectives and purposes of the General Plan of the City of Sunnyvale.

This finding can be made for the project as conditioned. The project is appropriately located along a major transportation and commercial corridor where future residents could utilize existing public transportation options (less than a quarter-mile away from a major bus stop and 3 miles away from two Caltrain stations). Commercial uses are also within walking distance from the project site (less than a quarter-mile away from retail, restaurants and services). In addition, the new office/retail tenant space within the new development allows the existing dental office use to continue to provide a neighborhood service in its present location. The new right-of-way improvements, including wider sidewalks, street trees, street lights and street dedications, will also help to further the goals for a more walkable and bike-friendly corridor.

While the proposed density (25 units per acre) is less than the General Plan designation of High Density Residential (24 to 45 units per acre), the reduced density is consistent with the existing R-3/ECR (Medium Density/Precise Plan for El Camino Real) zoning designation and reduces the potential impacts associated with high density projects in close proximity to lower density residential neighborhoods. The mix of housing types and sizes also contributes to the diverse housing stock and provides much-needed housing for the City.

Through the use of high quality architectural design, the new buildings will contribute positively to the streetscape. The ground floor of the El Camino Real building includes active spaces, such as office/retail tenant space and private recreational amenity areas for residents, which helps to reinforce the commercial appearance of El Camino Real. The preservation of several highly-visible trees, including three of the corner Live oaks and one large Valley oak tree, helps to add to the aesthetic value of the site. The proposed project also exceeds minimum tree replacement and landscaping requirements, which helps to soften the streetscape. Below is a list of relevant General Plan and Precise Plan for El Camino Real goals and policies.

General Plan:

Policy LT-1.7 Contribute to efforts to minimize region-wide average trip length and single-occupant vehicle trips. Locate higher intensity land uses and developments so that they have easy access to transit services.

Policy LT-2.1 Recognize that the City is composed of residential, industrial and commercial neighborhoods, each with its own individual character; and allow change consistent with reinforcing positive neighborhood values.

Policy LT-4.2 Require new development to be compatible with the neighborhood, adjacent land uses, and the transportation system.

Policy LT-4.13b Support convenient neighborhood commercial services that reduce automobile dependency and contribute positively to neighborhood character.

Policy LT-5.11 The City should consider enhancing standards for pedestrian facilities.

Policy CC-1.3 Ensure that new development is compatible with the character of special districts and residential neighborhoods.

Policy CC-3.1 Place a priority on quality architecture and site design which will enhance the image of Sunnyvale and create a vital and attractive environment for businesses, residents, and visitors, and be reasonably balanced with the need for economic development to assure Sunnyvale's economic prosperity.

Policy CC-3.2 Ensure site design is compatible with the natural and surrounding built environment.

Policy HE-1.1 Encourage diversity in the type, size, price and tenure of residential development in Sunnyvale, including single-family homes, townhomes, apartments, mixed-use housing, transit-oriented development and live-work housing.

Policy HE-4.3 Require new development to build to at least 75 percent of the maximum zoning density, unless an exception is granted by the City Council.

Precise Plan for El Camino Real:

Goal 3.2.5 To ensure that properties are developed and operated in such a manner as to minimize their negative impacts upon adjacent residential areas.

Goal 3.2.7 To require quality site design, architecture and landscaping which incorporate sustainable design principles.

Goal 3.2.8 To encourage development which supports the use of public transit.

Design Guideline 4.1.1 Site buildings to reinforce the El Camino Real streetscape.

Design Guideline 4.1.2 Provide landscaped setbacks at all street edges.

Design Guideline 4.1.3 Emphasize all entries to projects and individual buildings with special treatment of the paving and landscaping.

Design Guideline 4.3.1 Develop site plans to minimize impacts on adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Design Guideline 4.3.3 Respect the scale and character of adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Design Guideline 4.3.4 Limit privacy intrusions on adjacent residential properties.

2. The proposed use ensures that the general appearance of proposed structures, or the uses to be made of the property to which the application refers, will not impair either the orderly development of, or the existing uses being made of, adjacent properties.

The siting of the townhomes adjacent to the existing residential uses along the west property line helps to transition visual mass away from adjacent residents, and helps to reduce privacy impacts. The height and design of the El Camino building is consistent with other recently-approved projects. While the Fremont building will be tallest in the immediate neighborhood, the height and setback is consistent with the zoning district. In addition, the massing of most of the building is oriented interior to the site, which helps to further minimize the visual impact to neighbors. Right-of-way improvements and street dedications will further enhance the visual aesthetics of the site to the surrounding area, and contribute to a more walkable and bike-friendly corridor. In addition, the applicant is required to pay a fair share contribution (proportional to the project's impacts) towards improvements identified in the Wolfe Road Corridor Traffic Improvement Study, which will further help to reduce impacts. Therefore, the development meets most development standards, and is conditioned appropriately to reduce neighborhood impacts and ensure a high quality design.

Tentative Map

In order to approve the Tentative Map, the proposed subdivision must be consistent with the general plan. Staff finds that the Tentative Map is in conformance with the General Plan. However, if any of the following findings can be made, the Tentative Map shall be denied. Staff was not able to make any of the following findings and recommends approval of the Tentative Map.

1. That the subdivision is not consistent with the General Plan.
2. That the design or improvement of the proposed subdivision is not consistent with the General Plan.
3. That the site is not physically suitable for the proposed type of development.
4. That the site is not physically suitable for the proposed density of development.
5. That the design of the subdivision or proposed improvements is likely to cause substantial environmental damage or substantially and avoidably injure fish or wildlife or their habitat.
6. That the design of the subdivision or type of improvements is likely to cause serious public health problems.
7. That the design of the subdivision or the type of improvements will conflict with easements, acquired by the public at large, for access through or use of property within the proposed subdivision.
8. That the map fails to meet or perform one or more requirements or conditions imposed by the "Subdivision Map Act" or by the Municipal Code

Staff was not able to make any of the findings (B.1-8), and recommends approval of the Tentative Map.