



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item-No Attachments (PDF)

File #: 15-0356, Version: 1

REPORT TO PLANNING COMMISSION

SUBJECT

File #: 2015-7028

Location: Las Palmas townhome development (under construction) behind 660 W. El Camino Real (APNs: 201-40-043 through 078)

Zoning: C-2/PD

Proposed Project: Modification to approved **Special Development Permit #2012-7170** (mixed use development with 103 townhomes and 145-room hotel) to remove the requirement for a planned pedestrian connection from the Las Palmas townhome development to Cherry Glen Plaza.

Applicant / Owner: SummerHill 660 W. El Camino Real LLC (applicant) / (owner)

Environmental Review: Categorically Exempt Class 1

Project Planner: Ryan Kuchenig, (408) 730-7431, rkuchenig@sunnyvale.ca.gov

REPORT IN BRIEF

General Plan: Commercial General Business

Existing Site Conditions: Townhouse Development (Las Palmas) under Construction

Surrounding Land Uses

North: Hotel (Marriott Courtyard)

South: Multi-Family Townhouses

East: Commercial (Cherry Glen Plaza) & Multi-Family Townhouses

West: Commercial & Multi-Family Residential - Triplexes

Issues: Pedestrian Connection

Staff Recommendation: Approval

BACKGROUND

Description of Proposed Project

The proposal is for a site plan modification to an approved Special Development Permit that consists of 103 townhouses and a 145-room hotel (Marriott Courtyard). The hotel component of the original entitlement was approved and constructed under separate building permits, and is not related to this proposed plan modification.

The requested modification includes the removal of a gated pedestrian connection between the approved townhouse development and a neighboring commercial development to the east (Cherry

Glen Plaza). The connection to the neighboring commercial development was proposed and incorporated into the plans by the applicant in the early stages of the entitlement review of the project. The connection was considered to be a pedestrian amenity to encourage neighborhood walkability for residents of the new development. It provided a direct pedestrian connection to the nearby commercial uses and to major streets. The connection was part of the approved site plan and not described in the Conditions of Approval for the approved project.

The removal of this connection is considered a significant change to the project approval; therefore, requires a public hearing with the Planning Commission. The homeowner's association has provided a letter requesting the modification in Attachment 1. The review of this request is limited solely to the proposed site plan modification and does not include reconsideration of the approved project and Conditions of Approval.

Site Layout: An eight foot wall is positioned along the eastern boundary of the 6.35 acre townhouse project site. The gated access point in question was originally planned to be located at a point along the eastern boundary adjacent to one of the project's private streets (Holthouse Terrace) (A Site Plan is included in Attachment 3).

The pathway was originally designed and approved during the building permit stage with concrete steps to accommodate the approximate four foot grade difference between the residential project and the commercial property. During construction, City staff indicated that the connection requires a ramp to meet ADA requirements. A connection may not be installed without also providing an ADA accessible route. Staff acknowledges that the need for an ADA ramp at this location, due to the difference in grade of the two properties, was not discussed with the applicant earlier in the process. Staff concurs with the applicant that the current location is difficult to accommodate due to the proximity to the private street and limited 3 to 4-foot landscaped area. A minimum 4-foot wide ramp is required to be provided, per ADA requirements (See pages 2 & 3 of Attachment 3 provide more detail).

The driveway depths of the units along Holthouse Terrace, where the street runs north-south, have a minimum 5 feet. The needed ADA ramp would reduce the private street to 19 feet at this location. Due to the limited amount of area that includes the drive aisle, aprons in front of garages and perimeter landscaping, installation of the ADA ramp would leave only 24 feet. This is the minimum Code standard for residents to back out of their garages. The far edge of the backup space would terminate with a railing and a drop in grade to accommodate the ramp. Residents along this aisle have expressed their safety concerns with this configuration. The curbs in this location are painted red to restrict on-street parking; however, the portion of Holthouse Terrace where it turns north is not a required fire lane.

Staff has explored alternative designs with the applicant including relocation of the gated cross-access point. The applicant has indicated that due to infrastructure that is already built for the project, alternative locations are not feasible.

As originally approved, a gated vehicular and pedestrian access point is also located at the western boundary of the site. This vehicular access point connects Allegheny Drive, to one of the project's internal private streets (Holthouse Terrace). This gated access point is available only to residents of the development and for emergency access. The applicant does not plan modifications to this connection.

Discussion

As originally designed, the pedestrian connection was considered a positive site design element that would provide residents from the development with an alternative route to Mathilda Avenue and El Camino Real for access to nearby stores. Staff has met with the developer and residents of the Las Palmas development to discuss the request. Residents closest to the affected area expressed their safety concerns related to the maneuvering of vehicles entering and exiting these garages with a reduced amount of space due to the ramp installation. Although the needed modification would provide the minimum required back-out distance for vehicles, staff acknowledges that the required modification could reduce space for residents to maneuver their vehicles in and out of their garage and create a perceived safety concern. A letter from the homeowners' association has been provided that further details the residents' concerns.

Staff has reviewed other pedestrian access options with the developer including connections to one of the three other commercial properties along El Camino Real that share a property line with the townhouses.

The property at 590 W El Camino Real (former classic auto repair) has a pending application to redevelop the site which could afford another opportunity for a pedestrian connection. 590 W El Camino is adjacent to the main entry drive and staff finds that it would not provide much advantage to pedestrians.

The property at 550 W El Camino Real (Chick-fil-A) has recently redeveloped and has a requirement for cross access pedestrian and vehicular easements to each of its El Camino Real neighboring sites. This requirement does not include providing a pedestrian connection to the Las Palmas project. If a connection is proposed, it would require reconfiguration to assure a safe access path for pedestrians.

Lastly, there is 500 W El Camino Real (East Star Building Supply). At such time as this property redevelops, it could be beneficial to pursue a pedestrian connection with the Las Palmas townhouses.

Previous Actions on the Site

The Special Development Permit (2012-7170) for the townhouse and hotel project was approved by the Planning Commission on May 14, 2012. Prior to this development, an auto dealership had occupied the site since the early 1950s.

EXISTING POLICY

General Plan Goals and Policies: Key goals and policies from the Land Use and Transportation Chapter of the General Plan and Precise Plan for El Camino Real which pertain to the proposed project are included below:

Land Use and Transportation Chapter of the General Plan

Policy LT-4.3c Design streets, pedestrian paths and bicycle paths to link neighborhoods with services. (Previously LUTE Action Statement N1.3.3)

Policy LT-4.2a Integrate new development and redevelopment into existing neighborhoods.

Policy LT-4.3b Study the adequacy /deficiency of bicycle and pedestrian access and circulation within neighborhoods.

Precise Plan for El Camino Real

Policy 3.2.3 To maintain and enhance the capacity of the street to accommodate automobile and transit traffic, while providing improved facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Policy 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.

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

Policy 4.1.4 Provide well-defined and designed pedestrian circulation

Policy 4.1.4 b. Provide easy pedestrian access to building entries from side streets serving adjacent residential neighborhoods

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A Categorical Exemption Class 1 (minor alterations) relieves this project from CEQA provisions. The proposed modification to the site plan would not alter the CEQA findings for the project.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Notice of Public Hearings

- Published in the *Sun* newspaper
- Posted on the site
- 418 notices were mailed to property owners and residents within 300 ft. of the project site

Staff Report

- Posted on the City's Web site
- Provided at the Reference Section of the City's Public Library
- Made available at the City's One-Stop Permit Center

Agenda

- Posted on the City's official notice bulletin board
- Posted on the City's Web site

Staff has received emails from nearby residents recommending denial of the request (See Attachment 4). These emails note that the connection would improve walkability and provide a safer alternative for residents in the area. For clarification, as stated in the report, the pedestrian connection was designed for access for only residents of the new development.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the requested modification to the approved site plan to eliminate the pedestrian connection from the Las Palmas Development to the Cherry Glen commercial center.
2. Deny the requested modification to eliminate the pedestrian connection from the Las Palmas

Development to the Cherry Glen commercial center and require redesign of the site layout to accommodate the gated connection or to investigate an alternative pedestrian connection at another location

RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1. Approve the requested modification to eliminate the pedestrian connection from the Las Palmas Development to the Cherry Glen commercial center. The pedestrian connection was considered a beneficial site design feature of the project, and it is regrettable that the requirement for an ADA accessible ramp was not designed earlier on in the process. On balance, the required reconfiguration of the site would create a safety concern for new residents and affect the ability of adjacent residents to maneuver their vehicles in and out of their garages.

Prepared by: Ryan Kuchenig, Senior Planner

Approved by: Trudi Ryan, Planning Officer

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity and Noticing Radius Map
2. Letter from the Homeowners' Association and Developer
3. Site Plan & Exhibits Provided by the Applicant
4. Letters from the Public
5. Planning Commission Minutes of May 14, 2012