

PUD-96, Pleasanton Gateway, LLC, Commons at Gateway Residential
Work Session to review and receive comments on an application for a Planned Unit Development (PUD) Development Plan to construct 210 apartment units, 97 single-family detached units, and related site improvements on an approximately 26.72-acre site located at 1600 Valley Avenue (south of the Pleasanton Gateway Shopping Center). Zoning for the property is PUD-HDR and MDR (Planned Unit Development-High Density Residential and Medium Density Residential) District.

Marion Pavan presented the staff report and described the scope, layout, and key elements of the application.

Chair Blank referred to page A0-8 of Exhibit B, View-2: along Interstate 680, and indicated that one of the things he likes to do is look at projects that the Commission has approved and see what they look like after they have been approved. He noted that when the Commission approved Safeway, there was a lot of discussion about the Commission not wanting it to look like an off-ramp in Van Nuys. He further noted that the trees right now have not grown in, and getting down off of I-680, it looks like an off-ramp in Van Nuys and does not even come close to the Pleasanton look. He added that the Commission wanted it to really look like nice as a gateway and not like a place that was inviting people to get off and get on, even though Safeway does since it wants to entice people to use the gas and all the other stuff in that complex.

Chair Blank stated that he was trying to understand why the view from the freeway, as demonstrated in this exhibit, looks the same as before, like the whole complex is going to be exposed to the freeway, and wanted to know if that is that because of the angle it is drawn at and the trees have been eliminated.

Mr. Pavan replied that he thinks it is because the trees were not shown so the Commission and the public could have as clear and unobstructed view of these buildings as possible. He noted that the applicant, Scott Trobbe, is present tonight and respond to the question.

Chair Blank stated that one of the things that might be helpful for when this application comes back is to have a visual of what it really looks like going down I-680 looking laterally as opposed to angularly.

THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS OPENED.

Scott Trobbe, Applicant, stated that it was great to be back before the Commission. He indicated that he loves this process and is looking forward to getting some input from the Commission.

Chair Blank asked Mr. Trobbe to excuse him for interrupting but he wanted it to be included in the record that there is somebody who loves this process.

Mr. Trobbe stated that he is not lying because he has been through it. He indicated that he will keep his comments to a minimum as it is a workshop and it is getting late. He stated that he wanted to start off with thanking staff. He noted that the Commission has heard him say before that he deals with a lot of municipalities, and it is always refreshing for him when he works with Mr. Dolan, Ms. Stern, Mr. Pavan, and the other members of the Planning staff. He added that the collaboration that comes through, which was started several months ago, and the dialogue that they have had has always been great. He noted that the City is very fortunate that its Planning staff is very loyal to the City, and it bears repeating.

Mr. Trobbe stated that before he goes into some big picture items, he would like to introduce his team, present here tonight to respond to comments and questions on project specifics: KTG, Project Architect, who has done a number of deals here in the City; Smith and Smith, Landscape Consultants; and RJA, Civil Engineers, who both have an equally wonderful reputation. He indicated that there is a set of questions that the Commission is being asked to address toward the end of Mr. Pavan's presentation. He added that he can either give a brief description of their vision for the project and how they arrived at where they are, have his team respond to any questions the Commission may have, or take testimony from the public first and then have his team respond to questions.

Chair Blank stated that he would like to hear from the public first, and then have Mr. Trobbe and his team answer any questions that may be raised.

John Moore stated that he is a member of the HOA for Walnut Hills, the subdivision adjacent to this development. He informed the Commission that Mr. Trobbe has reached out to them on multiple occasions, attended multiple HOA meetings, given his presentation, gone over his proposal with the HOA, allowed a dialogue and feedback from the HOA regarding neighborhood concerns, and received some feedback from the residents as well. He indicated that it has been a constant dialogue with Mr. Trobbe, who has given out his cell phone number and business card at meetings to let people know that they could contact him any time they have a question about the property or have a viewpoint they want to share. He added that Mr. Trobbe has taken some of their ideas and feedback into consideration in developing his proposal.

Mr. Moore stated that he wanted the Commission to know how nice the process is where there is open communication, where Mr. Trobbe is open to the ideas and the feedback of the residents, and where the residents have had an opportunity to voice their input.

As a homeowner wearing a different hat from that of an HOA board member, Mr. Moore stated that from what he has seen so far, the proposal looks like a quality development. He noted that they can already see the type of development the developer is able to produce in the Gateway property. He indicated that even though the trees have not yet grown as high as they would like them to, everyone is in agreement that the shopping center is a nice place to do business at. He added that he thinks this development will

also reflect a nice place for someone to live in, and a development like this adjacent to their development can only enhance what they have and the value of their property.

Sean Sowell stated that the project looks really good and nice to see how it unfolds. He indicated that one of the things he noticed on page 18 of Exhibit A is the suggestion to move the bus stop to another location along the boundary between Valley Avenue and the existing development. As he noted in his earlier comments on the previous item, he requested that the need for the mass transit system not be disregarded, as those people who use that system are not present tonight to say anything and because for most people, this is not going to be just one stop but probably two or three. He suggested that these people be involved in the process rather than just moving the bus stop after the fact.

Mr. Sowell stated that he is not familiar with how the negotiation processes work between staff and the developer and noted that with regard to the recently-approved California Center, there was an Option A, Option B, and Option C showing the kinds of units that were going in, but with Options B and C coming later in the process rather than as part of the original packet. He requested that the process be adjusted for this project so that anybody can look at the entire project from the outset as part of the original packet rather than only at the end of the process.

Skip Shieh stated that he lives in Pleasanton and that Pleasanton is the best place in which to live, not only in America but in the whole world. He indicated that he and his wife came to the United States from Taiwan some 55 years ago and lived in a Chicago area called Lake Forest, which is the best place in the Chicago area. He stated that they lived there for about ten years and said noted that America is nice compared to Taiwan. He stated that they then moved to the Miami area and lived in Coral Gable, again the best place in the Miami area, where they bought a house with a pool and said that Miami is better than the Chicago area. He continued that ten year later, they again transferred, this time to Bakersfield, where they built a nice house on a two-acre lot with a modern swimming pool and everything. He indicated that it was hot but doable, so ten years later, they again transferred to Cupertino and looked for a house near the University, but they did not like any of the houses there. He stated that they searched all around from Milpitas to San Ramon and found a two-acre place in Pleasanton and have lived there for about 25 years. He noted that In the meantime, they travelled all around the world and went to almost every country, and by comparison, they have come to the conclusion that Pleasanton is the best place in the world. He indicated that he saw the advertisement for this new development which includes apartment, and he thought the plan was perfect so anyone looking for the best place in which to live, can be guaranteed a place in Pleasanton. He stated that the plan is a balanced approach and commended the developers for doing a good job.

THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS CLOSED.

The Commission then considered the questions for discussion.

Commissioner Posson stated that he met with Mr. Trobbe and Mr. Sweeney to discuss this project.

Commissioners Pearce and Olson stated that they also met with Mr. Trobbe and Mr. Sweeney.

Commissioner O'Connor stated that he was invited to meet with the applicants but was out of town at that time.

Chair Blank stated that he was also invited but unfortunately was not available either. He thanked the applicants for their invitation.

Mr. Shieh inquired when the project was going to start construction.

Chair Blank replied that it would be a while as it needs to be approved first.

Questions: Site Design and Open Space

1. Is the site plan acceptable as to building locations, circulation, parking, and feathering of densities?

Commissioners Olson and Pearce said yes.

Chair Blank and Commissioner O'Connor stated that they were a definite "yes."

Commissioner Posson stated that he was a "yes" but with a couple of questions. He referred to the third paragraph under "1. Planning Commission Discussion" on page 10 of the staff report which states that staff does not support a continuous wall facing Valley Avenue and prefers that the private yards for the patios face Valley Avenue. He inquired what the rationale for that was.

Mr. Dolan replied that the plans evolved to include a solid wall, and as a matter of fact, staff discussed this with Mr. Trobbe, and he has agreed to go back to the original design. He noted that Mr. Pavan showed the details on one of the slides where it is a very-low-based brick with some wrought iron above it. He noted that it just makes it a little more open, not so closed off from Valley Avenue, but with a clear delineation of space and visually less overwhelming than a wall.

Commissioner Posson stated that with that clarification, he is a "yes."

2. Are the open space areas and amenities acceptable? Should a public park be provided on the project site?

Commissioner O'Connor stated that when the Commission talks about open space, he always wishes that there was a little more room between the homes as far as yard

space. With respect to a public park being provided, he stated that there is a huge one just outside the development and so he is fine with what is proposed here because of the proximity to the City park.

Commissioner Pearce said “absolutely.” She noted that it is adjacent to the Bernal Property so she does not see the need for an additional public park. She added that given the standards, she thinks the open space options and amenities are acceptable.

Commissioner Olson agreed.

Mr. Posson inquired what the future planning or zoning for the area south of this development is.

Mr. Dolan replied that that area is part of the whole Bernal Park.

Commissioner Posson stated that he is in favor of that.

Chair Blank agreed, stating that it is not like it is a long way to the nearest park. He noted that he thinks the open space within the environment is actually pretty good.

Questions: Building Designs

3. Does the Planning Commission support the proposed building architectural designs?

Commissioner Posson said yes..

Commissioners O'Connor and Olson stated that they love it.

Commissioner Pearce indicated that she thinks it is great.

Chair Blank stated that it actually has a fair amount of the Pleasanton look so he is pretty happy with it, although it could always look more like Pleasanton.

4. Are the house sizes, lot sizes, and floor area ratios for the proposed single-family homes acceptable?

Commissioner Olson said yes.

Commissioner Pearce stated that she really likes the three-story row houses and thinks that it is an interesting model that Pleasanton does not have. She added that she thinks it is going to be pretty popular.

Commissioner Olson agreed.

Commissioner O'Connor stated that, again, he always likes bigger lots, but yes, he likes it.

Commissioner Posson inquired how this compares with the density and lot sizes of the houses in Walnut Hills.

Mr. Pavan replied that the density of Walnut Hills is 5.5 units to the acre, and the density of the single-family detached for the proposed project is 4.9 units to the acre. In terms of lot sizes, he indicated that the minimum lot size adopted for Walnut Hills is 4,000 square feet but really averages about 4,800 square feet. He added that it was comparable to the proposed single-family homes of this project.

Commissioner Posson stated that he is good with it.

Chair Blank stated that they were acceptable.

Questions: Exceptions

5. Does the Planning Commission support granting the exceptions from the Standards:

- A4.5. Where head-in parking occurs, a landscaped finger with street tree is required an average of every ten spaces.***
- A5.b. Garage doors should be recessed at least two feet from building façade.***
- A8.b Publicly accessible parks, plazas, and/or open spaces are encouraged for all sites greater than five acres, especially those sites not in close proximity to public parks.***

Chair Blank requested confirmation that with respect to parking, the applicant is requesting a landscaped finger every 12 to 14 spaces, and that with respect to the garage doors, the applicant is requesting that recessed garages not be required as they face one another.

Mr. Pavan confirmed that both were correct.

Chair Blank stated that he was confused about the public accessible parks, plazas and open spaces because the project is in close proximity to a public park.

Mr. Pavan replied that since the Commission has already rendered its judgment about the adequacy of the open space, this probably has already been decided.

Chair Blank stated that the Commission will then consider just the first two exceptions.

Commissioner Pearce stated that she is pretty comfortable with these exceptions. She noted that the Commission has granted more exceptions for a variety of developments that have come forward and, quite frankly, if this is all the applicant is asking for, it

seems minor in the grand scheme of things, especially for what they are providing on the site.

Commissioners Posson, Olson, and O'Connor indicated that they are fine with the exceptions.

Chair Blank stated that he was fine as well. He noted that the Commission has granted the exception for garage doors before with other projects, but he thinks the Commission has not done the fingers before. He stated that the only other comment he would make, just generally speaking, is that, when the project come back with the real application, and it is really worth spending the dollars, the applicant get high quality visuals as much as possible. He indicated that the Commission has had some really great visuals where the viewer could actually drive down the streets and see the landscape. He stated that it is really important for the Commissioner to make sure the landscape really does work and that the applicant find trees on steroids. He commented that he wished the Commission had specified trees on steroids for the Safeway development, but the Commission did not know then that such a thing existed. He noted that the better the quality of the visuals, the better the Commission will be equipped to go with the project. He then addressed the applicant saying that he thinks the applicant got a good sense of what the Commission desires.