CITY OF SAN MATEO
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 10, 2013

Approved

The meeting was convened at 7:30 p.m. in the City of San Mateo Council Chambers and was called to order by Chair Massey who led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Those present were: Commissioners Whitaker, Drechsler, Bonilla and Chair Massey. Vice-Chair Hugg was recused.

Minutes of 11/12/13 with the two minor changes on page 2 as indicated by Commissioner Whitaker. Motion to approve made by Commissioner Bonilla, 2nd by Commissioner Dreschler.
Vote: 4-0

Public Comment Period open / closed. No one wishing to speak.

ITEM 1
STUDY SESSION
PA13-058 CLASSICS AT SAN MATEO PRE-APPLICATION, preliminary review for the demolition of existing structures and major landscaping on site (including heritage trees) and the construction of a new 36,202 square feet, four story residential development with 27 units at 106, 110, & 120 Tilton Avenue, San Mateo. APN 032-311-120 and 130. The project site is 33,450 square feet located on Tilton Avenue between North San Mateo Drive and North El Camino Real. The surrounding uses include single-family residences to the west, multi-family residential uses to the north and south, and medical office use to the east. The project site is zoned R5 (Multiple-Family Dwellings – High Density).

Julia Klein, Associate Planner, gave the staff presentation.

Planning Commission had the following questions for staff. Commissioner Bonilla disclosed previous affiliation with Building Council, his retirement, and that there is no conflict of interest on this project.

- Has Police Department reviewed this project? *Staff: yes on a preliminary basis and they indicated that the height of fences might be a problem due to visibility concerns.*
- Staff mentioned 13 ft setback; but 15 ft shown on plans? Staff: On the left side setback (San Mateo Drive side), there are two units with 2 ft intrusion into the side setback. These are 2 ft. kitchen intrusions.
- The Historical Report is 8 years old. The consultant who wrote the report indicated they did not visit the San Mateo Public Library because it was not accessible and they went to Burlingame Library instead. This was around the time the Main Library was under construction. The consultant should visit the San Mateo Library and update report. The report also mentions that there was no access to back of buildings for whatever reason; –but that should be available now. A new or updated report is desired. *Staff: yes, the report will be updated..*
- The cultural report conclusion stated that there needs to be archeological monitoring. *Staff: This will also be updated.*
- Recall that previous project was approved with 52 units and included density bonus, which is a much higher density than this proposal. The proposed 35 units per acre is low. Would you explain how the previous project got to 52 units? *Staff: The base density for the project site*

allow for a maximum of 38 units. The previous Magnolia Place project included a density bonus under state law that allowed for an additional 30% of units based on the level of affordability of the units. That proposal included very low income level affordable units, which was how it was possible to reach 52 units. The current proposal of 27 units is approximately 35 units per acre, in terms of density.

- Attachment 5, Data Form's section on setbacks, references minimum of ½ the building height - for purposes of setback, how are building heights defined for purposes of setback? *Staff: Top of plate*.
- Data Form's section on parking, shows visitor parking in parenthesis, why? *Staff: The Data Form's parking section lists number of standard stalls, compact stalls, and ADA stalls. Visitor stalls may a standard stall or another type of stall, and are shown in parenthesis so they are not double counted as additional parking.*
- Data Form's open space section, shows that the minimum required is none? *Staff: The property is zoned R5 and based on the zoning code, no open space is actually required; but the applicant is proposing some for each unit.*
- The map that is included shows the site is ¼ mile from the downtown train station. Is that ¼ mile walking or as "the crow flies"? Staff: The distance shown is not walking distance; however, the walking distance is not that much further. Maybe slightly more than ¼ mile walking distance and would take approximately 5 – 10 minutes to walk.

Scott Ward (Founder) and Adam Kates (VP) of Classics Communities, LLC, along with architect, landscape architect, and civil engineer gave the applicant presentation.

- R5 does not have minimum density or # of units per acre. Current proposal is 35 unit/acre because of proximity to downtown transit station. For comparison, 35 units/acre is the minimum that is required in the Rail Corridor Plan Transit Oriented Development areas.

Questions for the applicant:

- 5 ft perimeter fence, on back property line shows fence squared off in back corners, but aerial show fence is at 45 degree angle. Would you clarify? *Applicant: The interior fence is at 45 degree angle to allow for the preservation of the heritage redwood tree in the southeast corner and keep symmetry in the other corner.*
- The project concept is referred to as single-family residences on a podium. The plans actually show underground parking and the building sits surface level. Having trouble figuring which it is. *Applicant: This is an innovative concept that is a hybrid of single-family and multi-family concepts. There is a common or shared garage. The podium is flush with grade with the parking in a common garage below. There will be a condominium map on the property.*
- Explain the private open spaces? Applicant: The units along the perimeter have private, small yards. The interior units have some patio space.

The Chair opened the public hearing. The following individuals spoke: John Margaroni, San Mateo: Mike Abkin, San Mateo; Neil Hersch, San Mateo.

- This is the 3rd attempt to develop this piece of property in 28 years. We are excited about having something built on this property. A number of neighbors have signed a petition to support development. Tilton Terrace neighborhood is supportive of the project.

- Property is presently fenced and there is concern about malicious mischief at the back, darker areas of the property. Neighbors are concerned. Can something be done?
- Appears to be a positive development. Have not maxed out density. Have 2 questions:
    - 1) There is a 40ft elevation on Tilton Ave. – Massive height is a concern? Would like to see 2-story instead of 3-story, maybe below market rate units on that side.
    - 2) The report notes that there would be no relocation assistance for current tenants because there are no tenants. Where did prior tenants go? *Staff: We do not have that information. It's our understanding that the previous owner, Tim O'Riordan, vacated the buildings then sold them to Classic Communities. The zoning code requirement for relocation assistance applies at the time of planning application. In this case, there are no tenants.*
- Also have 2 questions:
    - 1) What currently is the regulation between the rear wall of homes in the new development and the fence? Setback? Does it require a variance?
    - 2) Reference to off-street recycling site that has yet to be identified.
- One Commissioner asked how long it took the speaker to walk to the train station. *Speaker: About 5 minutes.*

No one else wishing to speak, the chair closed the public hearing.

Commission Questions/Comments for staff and applicant:

- The question about 40 ft elevation? *Staff: The proposed buildings are 3-stories and the overall building height and massing will be part of the later discussion on design.*
- Tenants and if relocation assistance applies? Staff: The San Mateo Municipal Code includes a provision requiring relocation assistance for tenants residing on a project site at the time of Planning Application submittal. No tenants resided on the property at the time of application for this project. It is staff's understanding that the tenants had already been vacated the property when the property was sold by Tim O'Riordan to Classic Communities.
- What are the rules for the space between the rear building wall and the fence? Is that the rear setback and no building would be located in that area? How does the setback rule work? *Staff: The rear setback is measured from the property line to rear building wall. No building can be located in the setback area. The Variance for 2 ft intrusion was for 2 proposed kitchen intrusions are in the side yard, refer to proposed units HS7 & HS8.*
- Off-street trash and recycling area? *Staff: The day-to-day trash/recycling storage is in the garage level. The question that needs to be followed up is where the staging would be located on ground level and where the bins are serviceable by Recology, the City's service provider. This will be discussed further with the applicant during formal Planning Application stage.*
- Is it contemplated that all residents will carry their trash to that trash/recycling storage area in the basement? *Applicant: yes*
- Regarding the neighborhood meeting summary notes, there were questions about the demolition of existing buildings as soon as possible. There are city regulations for this? *Staff: It's our understanding that the applicant has submitted an application to the Building Division/Official stating reasons why the buildings are unsafe and need to be demolished; however, the information provided was not sufficient and there are further questions from*

Building Division that will need to be addressed. The other issue to keep in mind is that the Demolition Permit does not authorize the removal of heritage trees. There are two separate processes: 1) a demolition permit request to the Building Official and 2) a heritage tree removal permit request to the City Arborist. Currently, the applicant's demolition permit application submittal relies on 2005 historical report. Given concerns voiced by the c*ommission, information will be passed along to the Building Official for consideration as the authority to issue the Demolition Permits for unsafe buildings lies with the Building Official.* Given age of buildings, will there be any evaluation of asbestos, etc. in existing ceilings, floors, etc. prior to demolition etc.? *Applicant: Yes.*

The Planning Commission had the following comments regarding the property.

Chair Massey requested that the list of topics for consideration be put on the screens.

1) Site Plan, Preliminary Design:

- Prior project, Magnolia Place (PA08-018), had much higher density. Zoning in downtown looks for density. The project site is located ½ block from bus stop, 5 minutes from downtown transit station. I'm concerned about the densities. I'd like it to be more dense than current proposal. The prior project has 52-unit project, was a higher density.
- I do like this project: underground parking, respect for neighbors. Concerned about the 5 ft perimeter walkway. Will there be some security from the side walkways?
- Location of buildings in relation to the street is fine.
- The 5 ft walkway is isolated and unsecured. It might become an area where trash and trimmings, etc., could collect over time. Perhaps applicant sees this as requirement of fire department but I'm not convinced it's a valid reason.
- Have concerns with the massing and building form, and how that is presented on the street face; but will discuss that later.
- Site layout: preference is for less single units, prefer more units grouped together instead. I don't think the current site plan utilizes the site as efficiently as possible.
- Layout: did we cover the garbage staging? – This could be a potential problem for unit(s) nearby. What is the plan for roll away garbage cans and how long do they stay out there?
- I like the layout and the fact that it is not as dense. I share concerns about perimeter walkway.
- The bike storage is way in the back and it would be preferable to also have it be more accessible from the front. Also, regarding the handicap spaces; are these the safest places to put the handicap spots? Look at locating them next to the elevator.
- Would like to see accommodation for electric vehicles in the garage.
- Density: The 52-unit Magnolia Place project utilized state density bonus law to get to that density. If I recall correctly, the Planning Commission wasn't particularly happy to do that; it was required state law. I don't want us to push the density bonus on the applicant. Lower density makes for happier neighbors. This is the size of development that fits into the neighborhood.
- Not overly impressed with single units; wastes space, units have small footprints, appears to have a high profile, there is little open space. Encourage developer to rethink it. No problem with level of density proposed, but more of how you do it.

- The 5 ft walkway, I find confusing. In another projects like this, the Fire Department required a perimeter. Has the Fire Department review this? *Staff: A full code evaluation has not been done yet.* Trash staging area: Idea of having only one trash area for everyone is unrealistic. Very prone to having people put things in the perimeter for someone else to pick up.
- Width of sidewalk as proposed in the front: Doesn't meet Pedestrian Master Plan's sidewalk width. Site Plan may need to be revised. These small single unit places don't make the best use of the property.
- Storm drainage and meeting C3 requirements need to be worked out.
- Archeological report and the monitoring plan will need to be updated.
- Sidewalk width and not conforming to Pedestrian Master Plan is an issue. Something that came up at the neighborhood meeting is that the new driveway ramp is near the driveway for the medical building. May need to look at some safety measures along the left side of the property for pedestrian safety.
- Trees: Disappointed to read that of the 13 existing heritage trees that we are only going to save one. That doesn't sit well with me. A benefit of assembling units in quads or duplexes is that you free up more open space and may save more of the heritage trees.
- Full support of other Commissioner's comments about ensuring sidewalks are in compliance with the Pedestrian Master Plan. Logistics at street level for the trash can area looks to be an area where cars may be parking at night. Will there be a conflict between the trash cans and cars there? Can the new driveway ramp be moved to the west side of the property?

2) Preliminary Design:

- The massing, proportion seems very odd because of the small footprint and the buildings are tall. Too narrow for their height.
- How do the future residents get from their vehicles in the underground garage to their respective homes? Use elevator or one of the two stairs. Some units will have a lot of walking – not the best arrangement. Accessibility and the fact that for someone in a wheelchair the bottom level of the unit is the only area accessible.
- Rear elevation: Concerned that there is no variation in color, all the same cream color. More color variation in the rear. Renderings look great but the actual paint swatches don't have a vibrancy to them.
- Private storage lockers, there are only 16. What sort of system are you going to use to distribute those among 27 units?
- Not keen on the applicant requesting a variance for the two units that do not comply with the 15' sideyard setback. Would have to find exceptional circumstances. Don't see that.
- Neighborhood comment about a drop off zone leading into the central walkway as part of the curb appeal. I like idea; although it isn't necessary.
- Large, flat wall facing San Mateo Drive should be made more appealing.
- What are the extenuating circumstances requiring the kitchens of the two units in question to intrude into the side setback – please explain.
- Accessibility: There is a larger % of our population growing older and will be tired of going up and down multiple stories. Accommodation for the fact that our population is aging – we need to build housing for older people.
- Colors: Could be a bit brighter; yet also need to blend into the neighborhoods.

- Unit HS4, near the driveway ramp, is lacking any architectural interest.
- There is only 1 entrance/exit for the garage. Look at providing some type of white zone in the front. *Staff: An on-street drop-off zone was approved for the previous project because that project had over 50 units and required a loading zone. This project doesn't meet the requirements for a drop-off zone. If there is one, would need to factor in how* Downtown Parking Plan being considered now.
- A lot of good features in this plan. I do have some concerns about the design. The buildings look like boxes; a number of high 3-story blank walls; buildings look very similar.
- Massing: Magnolia Place was a higher density project. Certain sense of monolith. Glad to hear the neighborhood is supportive of this project. I'd like to see something more imaginative.
- Overall height and layout: Some type of townhome style might be more efficient and provide relief from the massing.
- Plans show "Brisbane Box" tree. We have seen before that these have a nasty seedpod, ball bearings type; don't recommend for heavily traveled areas. Not much diversity being proposed – only three. A different type of 'box' might be more effective.

Announcements/Communications

1. From staff
    a. City Council directed staff to prepare findings that Michael's is consistent with the rail corridor to go back to the City Council on January 6.
    b. January/February two large projects – study session on redevelopment of Hillsdale Inn and Essex project study session
    c. January 14th potential study session on Planning Commission procedural items, such as meeting format, approach to ex parte communication and limiting time of meeting
2. From Commissioners
    a. Commissioner Whitaker is very disappointed at the decision that the City Council made regarding the Michaels/Borders appeal at their meeting of Monday night, December 9th. The City Council redefined the word mixed-use; a definition floated by the appellant and accepted by the council – different spaces in one structure – retail, 2 classrooms, and café. The concern is also that the applicant made changes to the project between the time it left the Planning Commission and went before the City Council. The appeal is on what we looked at and not what they modified to present to the City Council. Is mixed-use parcel by parcel or overall? CC looking at overall area and not individual parcels. This causes me great frustration.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:20 pm on Tuesday, December 10, 2013.