Item No: 2
Meeting Date: 11/25/2014

**To:** Planning Commission

**Date:** 11/17/2014

**Authorized By:** Ron Munekawa
Chief of Planning

**By:** Lorraine Weiss, Contract Senior Planner
(650) 522-7205 / Fax: (650) 522-7201
lweiss@cityofsanmateo.org

**Subject:** PA 14-009 CLASSICS AT SAN MATEO FORMAL SPAR APPLICATION;
106, 110 & 120 Tilton Ave, San Mateo, CA; APNs: 032-311-120, & -130

## RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning Commission approve the project by making the following motions:

1. Adopt the Categorical Exemption Section 15332 for In-Fill Development Projects based upon the Findings for Approval in Exhibit A.

2. Approve the Site Plan and Architectural Review (SPAR) for construction of twenty-seven residential units on a developed lot and 7-foot high wall; Site Development Planning Application (SDP) for the removal of 67 trees; and Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map to merge two existing parcels into one for condominium purposes based upon the Findings for Approval in Exhibit A, subject to the Conditions of Approval of in Exhibit B.

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The project site is composed of two parcels, totaling approximately 33,450 square feet, and is located on Tilton Ave, between North San Mateo Drive and North El Camino Real. The surrounding uses include single-family residences to the west, multifamily residential uses to the north and south, and medical office use to the east. (Refer to Attachment 1 – Vicinity Map.)

Presently, the on-site structures include a one-story duplex residence, a two-story 20-unit multi-family building and accessory structures. The existing buildings were evaluated by Architectural Resources Group for their potential as historic resources.

The site is zoned R5 (Multiple Family Dwelling – High Density) and is designated in the General Plan as High Density Multi-Family. This zoning allows for residential uses to be developed on the project site in accordance with the High Density Multiple-Family Dwelling development standards and the Multi-family Dwelling Design Guidelines.

The site includes 68 existing trees consisting of a mix of Tree of Heaven, Irish Yew, Cabbage, Coast Live Oak, Tawhiwhi, Eugenia, Avocado, Lemon, Tarata, London Plane, Wild Plum, English Yew, California Bay Laurel, Incense Cedar, English Walnut, New Zealand Laurel, Date Palm, Coast Redwood, Valley Oak, and English Holly. Thirteen (13) of these trees are protected trees. (Refer to Attachment 2 - Arborist Report.)

**BACKGROUND**

On December 10, 2014, the Planning Commission reviewed the pre-application submittal at a Study Session for the Site Plan and Architectural Review (SPAR), Site Development Planning Application, and Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map. Staff provided a presentation and the Planning Commission asked several questions for staff. The applicant gave a presentation that provided an overview of the design approach to the site plan and the Planning Commission asked several questions of the applicant.

Three (3) members of the public provided testimony. General comments expressed by the public included:

- This is the third attempt to develop this 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.

- The 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?

- It appears to be a positive development. The density has not been maximized.

- Along Tilton Avenue there is a 40-foot high elevation. The height is a concern. Two (2) stories is preferred rather than three (3) stories with below market rate units on this side of the project.

- The report indicates that there would be no relocation assistance. Where did the prior tenants go?

- What is the setback regulation between the rear wall of homes in the new development and the fence? Does it require a variance?

- Off-street recycling on the property has not yet been identified.

The Planning Commission asked questions of staff and the applicant, answered questions from the public and made the following general comments:

- The buildings look very similar and all are the same height resulting in a monolith appearance.
- Massing and building forms appear rather bulky.
- All units are three story single family detached units resulting in small footprints, high building profiles, and three story walls with very limited articulation.
- The amount and quality of communal area is limited.
- There is a lack of visual variety along the Tilton Avenue elevation.
- The uniformity of the units along the western edge of the site facing Tilton Terrace is a concern.
- The 5-foot wide walkway around the edges of the property seems unappealing.
- Concern expressed about the long access path from parking spaces to some of the units.
- Several Commissioners encouraged the grouping of units with fewer stand-along single family detached units.

The minutes of the December 10, 2013 Planning Commission Study Session meeting for this project are provided in Attachment 3.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed project consists of the demolition of all existing buildings on the project site and subsequent construction of a mix of 27 two-bedroom and three-bedroom for-sale units on a podium with one level of underground parking. The layout of the proposed development is comprised of ten different buildings with a mix of units and floor plans. Four detached dwelling units front Tilton Avenue, two six-plex structures front the north side boundary, five detached units front the south side boundary with three detached units behind them, and three detached units face the rear of the property. Internal to the site is a central plaza.

Vehicle parking requirements for the residents are satisfied with 58 vehicle spaces including 38 standard spaces, 17 compact spaces, three disabled spaces and five covered visitor parking spaces provided in the on-site garage. Long term bicycle parking is provided in the garage and short term bicycle racks are provided off Tilton Avenue near the entrance to the development. The residential density is approximately 35 units per acre. Overall, the proposed building height is approximately 37’-4” to top of roof or 34’-3” to top of plate which is under the permitted height of 55 feet. (Refer to Attachment 4 – Project Description and Project Plans.)

There are ten different floor plans proposed for the twenty-seven units. Unit sizes range from 1,238 square feet to 1,458 square feet in size. Eight units are two-bedrooms and 19 units are three-bedrooms each. A maximum floor area ratio of 2.0 is allowed (67,174 square feet) and the proposed project floor area ratio is 1.1 (37,278 square feet). A Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map is proposed to merge the two existing parcels into one for condominium ownership with the non-building areas on the site designated as common areas owned by the Home Owner's Association (HOA).

The entrance to the development along Tilton Avenue is through a security gate and common landscape grounds which opens up to a central plaza. The central plaza serves as a communal gathering place on the site. The applicant has provided an average of 224 square feet of private usable open space per dwelling unit and a total of 14,845 square feet of common open space within the project.

A 45-foot long loading zone is provided in the public street along Tilton Avenue across the sidewalk and in front of the project entrance. Within the loading zone is a 4-foot wide by 8-foot deep staging area for trash and recycling to be collected by the garbage service for pick-up.

A six-foot high solid wood fence is proposed at the rear property line abutting the adjacent residential properties. A seven-foot high pre-cast masonry wall is proposed adjacent to the commercial property. Three-foot high lapboard patio fences are proposed for the individual dwelling units.

The project includes new landscaping surrounding the proposed residential units and throughout the site with a variety of trees, shrubs, groundcover, and vines. A total of 58 trees will be planted through the site including Coral bark maple, Strawberry, Eastern Redbuds, Japanese Blueberry, and Princess Flower trees. These trees are shown to be planted around the perimeter of the site and on the podium. Six (6) Crepe Myrtle trees will be planted as street trees in the public sidewalk along Tilton Avenue. The existing Redwood tree in the northeastern corner of the site will be preserved and remain in its present location.

A loading zone is provided in the public street at the front of the project entrance along Tilton Avenue. Trash and recycling would be collected in a central area in the garage. At this time, it would appear that the trash/recycling/compost would have to be taken out to the street for pickup for service. An off-street trash/recycling "staging area" is shown has not yet been identified at this preliminary stage of the project.

Landscape materials include decomposed granite paving for fire access, interlocking pavers on the podium which abut interlocking pavers at grade, linear interlocking pavers on the podium, stainless steel band imbedded between pavers, concrete pavers, concrete steps, CMU split face raised planters, decorative pots, accent gravels, and entrance trellis. Outdoor furniture is provided including tables and chairs with umbrellas, and custom concrete couches.

The project requires Site Plan and Architectural Review (SPAR) approval for the site, building design, and 7-foot high perimeter wall. The proposed townhomes are a mixture of Spanish Eclectic (those units with tile roofs and heavy wood beams and columns) and English Traditional (all of the remaining units) in architectural style. Exterior building materials consist of Composite shingle and concrete tile roofs, stucco siding, cementitious lap siding, board and batten siding, cementitious smooth panel siding, cementitious trim, brick veneer cap, concrete stone veneer cap, iron rail, wood fence, low stucco wall, vinyl windows and fiberglass doors.

Open space for the project is provided primarily adjacent to each of the proposed units in a private yard that is delineated on the plans with fencing. A path between the good neighbor fence and the dwelling units is designed with planting pockets for a variety of vines.

A Site Development Planning Application (SDP) is required to remove 67 of the 68 existing trees on site to accommodate the proposed construction. The project will result in the removal of major vegetation including a mix of Ailanthus, Pittosporum, Cordyline, Coast Live Oak, English Yew, Irish Yew, Syzygium Paniculatum, Persea Americana, Citrus, London Plane, Wild Plum, California Bay, Avacado, Cedar, English Walnut, New Zealand Laural, Griselinia Lucida, Date Palms, Coast Redwood, Valley Oak, Eugenia, and Holly trees over 6" in diameter.

As proposed, the project requires Site Plan and Architectural Review (SPAR), a Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map to merge the two parcels into one for condominium purposes, and a Site Development Planning Application for grading and removal of major vegetation (including Heritage Trees). Draft findings for these entitlements are included as Exhibit A.

**CODE AND POLICY COMPLIANCE**

General Plan:
The General Plan Land Use Diagram designates the project site as High Density Multi-Family. Applicable General Plan policies are provided in Attachment 5. The policies that apply to this project address a variety of topics, including land use, traffic, housing, design, and noise.

Specifically, the City's Housing Element policies include protection of established single-family and multi-family residential areas, encouraging the provision of affordable housing by the private sector, and incorporating sustainability into future multi-family housing. The project meets these policies. This proposed residential density is within the maximum allowable for the R5 zoning designation. The applicant proposes to include affordable housing units in compliance with the City's Below Market Rate requirements either with three on-site units at a 10% low income or 4 units at 15% moderate income.

The General Plan's Urban Design Element policies call for new multi-family developments to conform to the City's Multi-family Design Guidelines that address the preservation and enhancement of neighborhood character through building scale, materials, architectural style,

open space, location of parking and lot size. The project has been determined to conform with these guidelines.

The City's design review consultant, Larry Cannon, reviewed the project and suggested modifications which have been subsequently incorporated into the project to ensure the project meets the City's Multi Family Dwelling Design Guidelines. These changes included the following as summarized in the City's Design Review Report, Attachment 6:

- The dwellings units have been grouped and made less boxy.
- More façade depth, varied roof orientation and visual interest with less of a boxy look.
- The central open space has been varied with improved entry courts at the multiplexes.
- All edge walkways have been varied and made more visually interesting.
- More interesting side elevations with height variations.
- More prominent unit entries.
- More sympathetic scale and façade variety related to the adjacent single family homes.
- More internal unit variety than the original design.
- More façade articulation and visual variety than the original design.
- Auto entry edges have been greatly improved.
- Improved Tilton Avenue façade articulation and individual unit variety and entry treatments.
- More articulate façade facing Tilton Terrace homes.

The City's design review consultant concluded that the proposed site plan and building designs are very much improved. The site layout is now roughly one-half single family detached units and one-half attached units contained within two six-plex structures. The units are still three stories, but there is substantially more visual variety in the facades with some two-story elements to break up the previous uniformity and tall blank walls of the structures. Special attention has been given to the building designs along the project edges at Tilton Avenue, Tilton Terrace, and the commercially zoned parcel to the east. The City's design review consultant will be in attendance at the public hearing.

Preservation of existing street trees and planting of additional trees are key policies in the City's Conservation and Open Space Element of the General Plan. The applicant is proposing to remove most of the existing on-site trees including thirteen protected trees. One heritage tree, a Coast Redwood tree is proposed to be retained in its present location at the northeast corner of the site and the development will be enhanced with all new landscaping. A total of fifty-eight new trees including, but not limited to, twenty–three Strawberry trees 24-inch box size and four Coral bark maple trees 15 gallon size, eight Eastern redbud trees 15 gallon size, nine Japanese blueberry trees 15 gallon size, and eight Princess flower trees 15 gallon size.

The project includes private open space areas for each of the units.

A noise study with acoustical analysis that shows compliance with the City's Noise Ordinance has been submitted. The project is also specifically conditioned during construction activities in order to reduce noise impacts.

Zoning Code:
The proposed project meets all of the development standards for the R5 (High Density Multiple Family Dwellings) zoning classification in that the proposed 27 units is below the maximum allowable 38 units for the property. The residential density is approximately 35 units per acre, well within the allowable density for R5 zoned properties. A Multi-Family Residential Data form is included as Attachment 7, which summarizes the project's compliance with applicable requirements.

The project site is located within approximately a quarter mile radius from the Downtown Caltrain station and, while the site is not zoned Transportation Oriented Development (TOD), the proposed 35 units per acre density is similar to TOD's density range of 35 - 50 units per acre.

The project is located within the City's Central Parking and Improvement District (CPID) area. The Zoning Code specifies that residential parking is required to be provided on-site to meet citywide standards since the site is not within the Downtown Retail Core. As proposed, the project meets the minimum parking requirements.

Sustainable Building Design*:*
The applicant completed a Residential Green Point Rated Checklist (for Single Family) because while the multi-family checklist assumes a common hot water system and/or common central air, this project proposes neither and it was recommended that the single family checklist be used for this project. Compliance with the City's Green Building ordinance requires a minimum of 75 points be obtained through a variety of green building techniques and applications. The applicant has indicated 129 points in green building techniques and methods on the Green Point Rated Checklist. As a sampling, these items include, but are not limited to installing high efficiency irrigation systems, using non-combustible siding materials and fire resistant roofing materials, installing water efficient fixtures, and installing energy efficient dishwashers. (Refer to Attachment 8 - Green Point Rated Checklist.)

Historical Resource Evaluation:
A Historic Review Evaluation was first conducted by Architectural Resources Group (ARG) in 2006 for the properties at 106, 110 and 120 Tilton Avenue and updated in 2014 (refer to Attachment 9, Historic Review update March 28, 2014). The updated ARG report concluded that the properties were not eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources and did not qualify as a historic resource under CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5 (refer to page 5 of the updated report).

Site Layout and Overall Security:
At the Planning Commission Study Session, there was concern that the five-foot high perimeter fence could promote an area for potential criminal activity. The revised proposed project includes a proposed six-foot high fenced pedestrian pathway along the perimeter south side and rear property lines of the project site, and a seven-foot high wall along the north side property line. Along the individual dwelling unit fences are pockets for planting. The perimeter fencing and the issue of designing to minimize potential safety issue has been reviewed by the City's Police Department and the City's Design Review Consultant. With a recommended condition, the Police Department finds that the design of the fences adds access control with a degree of natural surveillance (refer to Exhibit B).

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The project is categorically exempt under the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per Section 15332 because the project meets the conditions described in this Section based on the Findings of Approval in Exhibit A and subject to the Conditions of Approval in Exhibit B:

(a) The project is consistent with the general plan and policies as well as zoning designation and regulations;
(b) The proposed development occurs on a site of no more than five acres substantially surrounded by urban uses;
(c) The project site has no value as habitat for endangered, rare or threatened species;
(d) Approval of the project would not result in any significant effects related to traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality;
(e) The site can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services.

The environmental studies prepared for this project are provided in Attachments 2 (Arborist Report), 10 (Noise Study), and 11 (Traffic Study).

**NOTICE PROVIDED**

In accordance with Government Code section 65090, notice of this hearing was published in the Examiner newspaper 10 days before this Study Session. In accordance with Government Code section 65091 and the City's Municipal Code noticing requirements, this hearing was noticed to the following parties ten days in advance of the November 25, 2014 Planning Commission meeting:

- Property owners, residential tenants and business tenants within 1,000 feet of the project site;
- The City's "900 List" which contains nearly 100 Homeowner Associations, Neighborhood Associations, local utilities, media, and other organizations interested in citywide planning projects.

- The interested parties list which includes interested individuals who contacted the City and requested to be added to the project notification list.

At the time of printing of this report, three written public comments had been received (refer to Attachment 12 - Public Comments). Both letters expressed support for the proposed development. Public comments received following the printing will be provided under separate cover to the Planning Commission at their desks on the date of the public hearing.

**EXHIBITS**

A. Findings of Approval
B. Conditions of Approval

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Vicinity Map
2. Arborist Report, Barrie D. Coate and Associates, March 13, 2013 and updated April 21, 2014
3. December 10, 2013 Planning Commission Study Session Meeting Minutes
4. Project Description and Reduced Project Plans
5. Applicable General Plan Policies
6. Design Review Report, Larry Cannon Design, November 10, 2014
7. Multi-Family Residential Data Form
8. Green Point Rated Checklist
9. Historical Evaluation Update, Architectural Resources Group, Inc., March 28, 2014
10. Noise Study, Charles M. Salter Associates, Inc., August 28, 2014
11. Traffic Study, Hexagon Transportation Consultants, Inc., May 14, 2014
12. Public Comments

**CC (AR and attachments (hardcopy) via USPS First Class Mail)**
Applicant/Property Owners

**CC (Website link to AR and attachments via Email)**
Interested Parties (if email address was provided)