Item No: 3
Meeting Date: December 9, 2014

To: Planning Commission

Date: December 1, 2014

Authorized By: Ron Munekawa,
Chief of Planning

By: Gavin Moynahan, Associate Planner
gmoynahan@cityofsanmateo.org
650-522-7211

Subject: PA14-080, 2 West 3rd Avenue Pre-Application
2 West 3rd Avenue; APN: 034-093-050

RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning Commission review the proposed mixed use project on a preliminary basis, receive public comments, and provide input to the applicant and staff on the conceptual project, including its relationship to other proposed projects at the Three Corners site.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The project site is currently a vacant lot located at the northwest corner of 3rd Avenue and South El Camino Real. A Union 76 gas station was formerly on the site and was demolished in early 2014. The site is located just to the west of the City's "downtown core" and together with the two other corner properties at East 3rd Avenue and South El Camino Real, the intersection has the potential to form a major entryway into downtown.

The property is approximately 11,464 square-feet in area and is located on the north side of 3rd Avenue between Arroyo Court and South El Camino Real and 3rd Avenue (bordered with street frontages on three sides). The site is generally bounded by multi-family residential to the west and north, commercial uses to the east, and a Bank of America branch to the south. The project site is zoned E2 -2/R5 (Executive Offices/Residential Overlay) and the General Plan land use designation is Executive Office/High Density.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A formal planning pre-application proposal has been submitted for the construction of a new four-story development project. The proposed development consists of 11 housing units on the second through fourth floors, ground floor retail space, and 41 parking spaces located in one-level of underground parking (39 spaces) and at ground level (two accessible spaces). At this time, the proposed project contains rental apartment units; however, condominium ownership units would also be permitted with approval of a Subdivision Map to create condominiums.

The proposed architectural style is modern and is designed to provide a transition from the downtown core to the mixed residential and commercial area west of South El Camino Real, which includes the City's Main Library. The project is contemporary in design featuring rectilinear shapes and flat planes. The proposed exterior surface is a smooth finished plaster in a chalky white. The fenestration is arranged in sets of vertical columns and rectangular shapes and present on each elevation. Common meeting space for the residential occupants is located on the fourth floor with an indoor/outdoor meeting room with shared amenities for socializing. The landscaping is comprised of street trees and landscape containers on the ground level.

The project is the first proposal in the City to include a mechanized Klaus parking system to automatically lower, park, store, and retrieve tenant, employee, and visitors' automobiles from the basement. Access to the site would be from West 3rd Avenue with a one way drive isle that exits departing vehicles onto Arroyo Court. Bicycle storage lockers are proposed proximal to the west property line with a capacity for 15 bicycles. Project plans are included as Attachment 5 and the applicant's written description is included as Attachment 6.

As presently designed, the project is anticipated to require the following planning approvals:

- Site Plan and Architectural Review (SPAR) for new mixed-use building;
- Site Development Planning Application for Grading for below grade parking garage;
- Special Use Permit for potential bank or retail use;
- Tentative Subdivision Map for condominiums; and,
- Environmental Review Document.

CODE AND POLICY COMPLIANCE

The City's General Plan and Downtown Area Plan include specific policies that are tailored to the unique characteristics of the City's Downtown. Proposed developments in the City's downtown are reviewed for conformance with applicable polices and guidelines set forth in the General Plan, Downtown Area Plan, zoning code, and other applicable regulations (refer to Attachments 2 & 3 for applicable policies).

General Plan

The General Plan Land Use Diagram designates the project site as Executive Offices/High Density Multi-Family. A preliminary list of applicable General Plan policies are included in Attachment 2, these include policies pertaining encouraging a variety of housing types (including mixed-use), encouraging pedestrian enhancements, and encouraging development of affordable housing. The formal planning application submittal will be required to provide further clarification and/or documentation to ensure conformance with all applicable polices and guidelines.

Downtown Area Plan

The project site is located in the Downtown Area Plan area. A preliminary list of applicable Downtown Area Plan policies are included in Attachment 3, including policies that encourage high density/intensity development in the downtown core area (including mixed-use commercial-residential development), ensuring adequate parking to meet expected needs, and providing commercial support for existing and new residential development. The project is within the Downtown Plan West of El Camino Real subarea. As such the project will need to participate in the regional Grand Boulevard Initiative as well as enhancing pedestrian connections from west of El Camino Real to the Downtown.

Zoning Code

The project site is located in an area that is zoned E2-2/R5 (Executive Office/Residential Overlay District). The residential overlay zoning designation permits high density residential up to 50 units per acre as the base density with a maximum floor area ratio of 3.0. The mixed-use project is required to comply with the setbacks of the underlying zoning district (in this case, E2) and the residential open space requirements through private open usable open space, common usable open space, or a combination of both. The applicant is expected to provide more detail in their formal planning application submittal; which will then be reviewed for compliance with all applicable municipal code requirements. The proposed retail use on the ground floor is subject to the review and approval of a Special Use Permit.

Design Review

The formal planning application review of the project will also include a design review evaluation by the city's Design Review consultant for consistency with the Urban Design Element of the General Plan.

Green Building

The project is anticipated to be in compliance with the California Green Building Standards Code. The CALGreen Code replaces the City's Green Building Ordinance which was rescinded effective January 1, 2014. At this preliminary stage, the applicant has identified the following green building components for the project: the provision of short term and long term bike parking and the installation of an automated parking system to reduce the overall footprint of the building dedicated to automobile parking. The applicant has indicated that they are aware of the new CALGreen Code requirements and will be able to provide more detail as the project design evolves.

Art in Public Places

The Art in Public Places fund is administered by the Civic Arts Committee, but the Planning Commission and members of the public provide comment and input. Projects of a certain valuation are required to provide public art if the building permit valuation equals to three million dollars or more. If public art is required, an opportunity exists where the project in conjunction with the other two corner properties could be used to establish a coordinated entry feature signaling a gateway into the downtown area. An alternative would be to provide other recommendations on the nature and/or location of a public art piece.

Additional Policies

Furthermore, the project will also be evaluated for consistency with the city's Pedestrian Master Plan and Bicycle Master Plan.

ISSUES

Public Art

The Art in Public Places fund is administered by the Civic Arts Committee, but the Commission and members of the public provide comment and input. Projects of a certain valuation are required to provide public art if the building permit valuation equals to three million dollars or more. If public art is required, an opportunity exists where the project in conjunction with the other two corner properties could be used to establish a coordinated entry feature signaling a gateway into the downtown area. An alternative would be to provide other recommendations on the nature and/or location of a public art piece.

Site Design

The design of the project is preliminary; however staff has some concerns with elements of the site's design. Although Staff supports the idea of a one-way drive isle to serve the automated parking—questions regarding the safe queuing and exiting of cars will need to be addressed. Staff also has concerns with the location of bike storage lockers along the drive isle. The proposed location limits opportunities to landscape this potential buffer zone and may create issues with bike, pedestrian and auto safety. Additionally, the proposed accessible parking spaces located on the Arroyo Court side of the project are prohibited from requiring motorists to back-out into the public right-of-way and will need to be reconfigured.

Building Design

Staff supports the design concept of providing a mixed-use building with residential over retail and underground parking. However, the preliminary design of the building creates questions about the project's ability to architecturally connect the residential neighborhoods to the west with the commercial designs located across the street and downtown. The proposed building's form and rectilinear design may benefit from additional finishes and materials to help soften the impact of the structure.

Automated Parking System

The proposed projects present a variety of issues that must be resolved by the applicant and through the formal review and approval process. This includes working through the challenges of and potentials of automated parking.

- Queue times for those waiting to park or retrieve their vehicles
- Access by the new users, the disabled and emergency responders
- Operation during power outages or mechanical failure
- Maintenance of the facility
- Training of tenants, guests, employees, and visitors of the automated system
- Long-term system reliability

NEIGHBORHOOD INPUT

The applicant held a formal pre-application neighborhood meeting on November 18, 2014 jointly with the applicants from the other two corner properties at 2 E 3rd Ave and 221 S El Camino Real. The meeting was attended by approximately 40 community members. The comments were generally positive (refer to Attachment 8). There were a few issues raised by the public that would benefit from further analysis. Public comments are summarized below:

- Traffic/circulation including proximity to busy El Camino Real and the impact to neighboring residences;
- Parking (impacts to parking with the automated parking system and overall impacts as a result of the three corners projects in total);
- Massing/height of building;
- Traffic;
- Noise;
- visual impacts from the adjacent residential building; and
- Architectural design and context with existing and proposed buildings in the vicinity.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Additional public comments were received by staff and are summarized below (refer to Attachment 9):

- General lack of parking in the area and the impacts from new construction
- Concerns with the lack of “gateway” architectural style
- Incorporation of solar panels as a part of the building design

BUDGET IMPACT

This project will be required to pay fees in-lieu of dedicating land for park and recreation purposes, as well as other impact fees applicable to new developments. The exact amount of these fees will be based on the formula and timing established in the city’s Comprehensive Fee Schedule.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

There are a number of environmental issues that need to be addressed during the formal review of the project including traffic, noise, air quality, and greenhouse gas emissions, and additional environmental issues as may be raised at the neighborhood meeting or study sessions. The formal planning application review phase will include an analysis of the project's effect on environmental factors as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Areas to be evaluated include, but are not limited, to:

- Aesthetics,
- Air Quality,
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions,
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials,
- Hydrology and Water Quality,
- Land Use,
- Noise,
- Public Services and Utilities,
- Transportation Circulation and Parking.

While a complete listing of all technical studies that may be necessary for the environmental review is not available at this preliminary stage, it is anticipated that the studies will include: a traffic, circulation and parking study, shadow study, design review analysis, greenhouse gas analysis, and geotechnical study.

NOTICE PROVIDED

In accordance with Government Code section 65090, notice of this meeting 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 18, 2014 neighborhood meeting:

- Property owners, residential tenants and business tenants within 1,000 feet of the three corners project sites;
- 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 City's Planning E-Notify Email list; and,
- The interested parties list which includes interested individuals who contacted the City and requested to be added to the project notification list.

Written public comments are included in Attachment 9.

PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION – REQUESTED INPUT AND NEXT STEPS

At this time, Planning Commission input is requested on the following areas of concern:

- Site Design – Including proposed open space, landscaping, pedestrian and vehicular access, and bike storage location.
- Building Design – The overall architectural style and design approach, including building materials, massing and building forms.
- Mechanized Automated Parking – The proposal to use a mechanized automated parking system to efficiently park the required number of vehicles on a compact lot.

Following the Study Session, the applicant will revise the plans as necessary to respond to comments from Staff and the Planning Commission and submit a formal Planning Application.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Location Map
2. General Plan – Applicable Policies
3. Downtown Area Plan – Applicable Policies
4. Preliminary Mixed Use Data Form
5. Preliminary Project Plans
6. Applicant's Project Description
7. Klaus MV Parking Brochure
8. November 18, 2014 Neighborhood Meeting Notes
9. Public Comments
10. Sample Findings

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

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