

Neighborhood Meeting Notes for Three Corners Projects on El Camino Real and 3rd Ave

Planning Applications: PA14-079, 080, 081

Meeting Location: City Hall – Council Chambers, 330 W 20th Avenue, San Mateo, CA 94403

Meeting Date/Time: Tuesday, November 18, 2014, 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Attendees: Approximately 23 members of the community signed in (scanned sign-in sheet is available)

City Staff:

Ronald Munekawa – Chief of Planning

Marcus Clarke – Economic Development Manager

Simon Vuong – Associate Planner

Gavin Moynahan – Associate Planner

George White – Community Development Director

Darcy Forsell – Principal Planner/Zoning Administrator

Rebecca Zito – Senior Management Analyst

Planning Commissioners:

Rick Bonilla

Charlie Dreschler

Applicants & Representatives:

221 S El Camino Real

Robert Isackson

Catie Baldwin

Jon Ennis

2 E 3rd Ave

Mike Field

Jamie D'Alessandro

Craig Almeleh

Ellis Berns

Lisa Ring

2 W 3rd Ave

Robert Van Dale

Pedro Rodriguez

Introduction:

Ron Munekawa briefly described the purpose of the Pre-Application Neighborhood Meeting. No formal vote is taken, and no thorough studies have been performed yet. Two Planning Commissioners are present tonight, including Mr. Bonilla and Mr. Dreschler. Planning Commission Study Session is scheduled for December 9th, and a formal Planning application is expected to be submitted after.

Applicant Presentations:*221 S El Camino Real*

Robert Isackon is the project sponsor, and they have been working on the project for quite some time with the County Environmental Health Department on environmental regulations. A prior application was approved by the City, but environmental laws have changed. Dan Schalit was the prior project manager, and Jon Ennis and Catie Baldwin of BDE Architecture are now involved. The proposal is for a 3-story building that adheres to City regulations. Jon Ennis of BDE Architecture introduced himself and other members of the team. Elevations for all three sides of the building are shown unfolded, and Jon describes the proposed amount of square footage and proposed height. Proposed uses are office, retail, and commercial. Photos of the surrounding buildings are shown, including the intersection. Bike storage will be provided inside, and fine exterior details, such as material and awnings will be used. The 3rd floor is setback further from the 2nd floor. People have been responding well to the clock tower design. The rooftop has room for future photovoltaic panels.

2 E 3rd Ave

Jamie D'Alessandro introduced himself and described his firm as locally-based; we also own the building with 'Vault 164' and 'Cream'. Mike Field describes site as a former gas station, site is pretty small. They would like this to be a gateway building that we can be proud of, and have designed a 24,000 sq ft, 3-story building. It speaks to the building across the street (221 S El Camino Real), and has a similar tower/corner feature. The goal is to have a LEED building. Aluminum sunshades are proposed. Entries are difficult at the site, and office lobbies have been moved towards the end, reserving the corner for retail space. Street trees and pedestrian amenities are also proposed.

Craig (architect) describes the goal is to mix a lot of materials to create an intimate feeling, layers of material are proposed to create better human scale. Retail in front, office, utility and miscellaneous rooms are in the back, wants this to be a green building.

2 W 3rd Ave

Robert Van Dale described his firm as residential architects. The project is unique in that it's an urban infill project, and was designed in context with the neighborhood, retail and office space on ground floor, residential on three floors above, with an underground garage. The interesting part of the project is a car elevator; this system makes all 39 parking spaces accessible. Pedro will describe the parking later. Project is a 26,000 sq ft building, with a common area at the roof, and the building is terraced and cut back at the corner. Beautiful oak trees on-site are to remain. Elevations and views are then shown. The parking is one-of-a-kind and the first in the country. Site is a former gas station; we're bringing in quiet housing, reducing pollution/CO2 emissions.

Pedro (Klaus Parking) specializes in automatic parking. They have a large presence in the bay area. You drive into a one-car garage, it comes down and gets stored. You will receive a key card/fob to retrieve your car. It takes about 2-4 minutes and will have easy flow of parking. 99.65% reliability rate.

Downtown Parking Initiatives:

Marcus Clarke, Economic Development Manager, spoke about how the City is working on downtown parking and will be working on implementing the Downtown Parking Management Plan, adopted by the City in April 2014. A new parking manager will start in January. Since earlier this year, nighttime parking has been available at the library, zipcars have been introduced at Draper University, there are still some underutilized lots, and they are trying to create ways to manage parking, such as having employees park elsewhere.

Question & Answer:

221 S El Camino Real

Q: Parking, signage, type of retail is important (having a sports bar would be problematic), lighting standards and glare are important. Also existing street trees should be maintained and sidewalks should be kept clean. Having these beautiful buildings on these vacant sites would be great, but as recessions come and go, what particular types of tenants could we attract to avoid that cycle?

A: Rob Isackon answered that there will be strict signage control and they will follow City standards, and they will make the buildings with nice material and be architecturally pleasing.

Q: What is the size of the property?

A: It's about 120' x 100.

Q: Why are you not providing underground parking?

A: Rob Isackson indicated that additional curb cuts are not desired, the site is constrained, and previous studies connecting to the 2nd Ave garage to the north were done, but the analysis was not positive.

Q: I'm impressed with the 2 E 3rd Ave project in that the corner feature is beveled; can 221 S El Camino Real replicate it?

A: 221 S El Camino Real was the original project, and includes a prominent corner feature, but this can be examined in future iterations.

Q: A tradesman introducing himself as Ryan is curious to know if the project will be using trades and apprentices.

A: We will look into it. We have used union labor in the past.

Q: When will construction start?

A: Probably about 12 months from ground breaking, but we'll have to wait since further studies are required as part of the City's formal review process.

Q: Once approved, how long will environmental cleanup take?

A: The site is already clean.

Q: If 200-300 employees are expected on-site, why haven't concerns for parking been addressed?

A: We're expecting most of the users to be taking Caltrain. In-lieu fees are meant for projects like this.

Q: Who are some possible tenants?

A: It is difficult to say at this point, but we have worked with Whole Foods, Charles Schwab, Bank of America, and other jewel box stores before. We want this to be a high-quality space, no massage uses.

2 E 3rd Ave

Mike Field has indicated that their site is clean as well. Indicated gas station sites are much easier to cleanup than say former drycleaner sites.

Q: What is the timing of the project?

A: Mike Field indicated that it depends on how much it takes to order steel, the time it takes to process plan checking, etc.

Q: If 200-300 employees are expected on-site, why haven't concerns for parking been addressed?

A: They are aware of the concerns, but they cannot solve the Citywide problem of parking individually on-site.

Q: Who are some possible tenants?

A: These buildings are going to be desirable; the projects may capture existing tenants in downtown who may not have room to expand. There are lots of existing users/tenants in downtown that take CalTrain.

Q: How much taller is this building than the neighboring building on 4th and El Camino? Have you considered the appearance of the back of this building while driving north?

A: The south elevation will be treated appropriately as you drive north, there are score lines, brick, and keep in mind with a new project you will not see it.

2 W 3rd Ave

Q: The parking is brilliant, but what is the residential parking ratio?

A: 17 spaces are devoted to residential, and 22 spaces are for retail.

Q: What is the height of the neighboring building?

A: Next door is 11 stories, this project is 4 stories.

Q: What type of tenants/residential is proposed? The neighborhood could use smaller units.

A: They will be rental units, 10 two-bedroom and one three-bedroom.

Q: Is it as white as it looks?

A: It's more crisp and contemporary, but the color is very subjective.

Q: What kind of material, EIFS?

A: Portland cement, plaster.

Q: Any affordable housing?

A: It is required by law, 10%

Q: If automated parking takes between 2-4 minutes for a car to be retrieved, what happens when they all leave at the same time?

A: Twice a day there's a higher concentration, so it may take slightly longer. It's not much different than valet or subterranean parking.

Q: Might they use surface parking?

A: There is street parking available.

Q: People who already live on Arroyo Ct already park there.

A: This project is providing parking on-site for all functions of the building.

Q: Have you considered selling parking since the project provides more than 1 stall per residential unit?

A: No, we haven't.

Q: Will retail employees have access to the garage?

A: Yes

Q: We live next door and are shocked at the footprint and height of the project and no gardens are proposed.

A: We understand; we'd have to discuss that.

Q: What happens when there is a power outage (in reference to the garage)?

A: There is a backup generator provided.

All Three Projects

Kevin Contreras, a member of local 104, commented that with all of this new construction will these jobs have local workers with area standard wages.

Edward Evans commented that it makes sense to keep construction workers local.

Q: Timing. Since the three projects may be constructed concurrently, who manages construction to make sure things run smoothly?

A: Ron Munekawa indicated that the Public Works Department has conditions related to staging and construction vehicle parking/traveling on certain streets. These will be addressed at the formal application phase.

Q: The buildings look very nice. Would the Planning Commission look at the three projects simultaneously in terms of design?

A: Ron Munekawa stated that we will look at all three projects and try to find consistency and continuity, but they need not be identical.

Conclusion:

Ron Munekawa stated that the Planning Commission Study Session will be more structured, and that the items will be presented in the same order as they did tonight. He thanked everyone for attending and concluded the neighborhood meeting.

This page intentionally left blank