

CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT
JUNE 1, 2022

5. STUDY SESSION

5.1 Study Session to Discuss a Request for a New Office Building and Parking Structure at 301 to 381 East Evelyn Avenue

RECOMMENDATION

That the Environmental Planning Commission provide input on the proposed project.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

The Environmental Planning Commission's (EPC) agenda is advertised on Channel 26, and the agenda and this report appear on the City's internet website. All property owners and tenants within a 750' radius and other interested stakeholders were notified of this meeting.

BACKGROUND

Project Site and Location

The approximately 16.6-acre project site is located on the south side of East Evelyn Avenue, between Ferry-Morse Way and State Route 237. The site is surrounded by East Evelyn Avenue and the Caltrain/Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) light rail tracks to the north, State Route 237 to the east and south, and Ferry-Morse Way and the Whisman Road overpass to the west.

The project site is currently developed with a low-intensity office campus and contains five 2- to 3-story office buildings. These buildings are situated in the center of the site surrounded by surface parking and landscaping that includes trees and shrubs. Recently, completed cosmetic upgrades were made to the exterior of the buildings and substantial site improvements, including the creation of a focal amenity (central plaza) within the landscape area in between the buildings, facing the East Evelyn Avenue frontage.



Figure 1: Location Map

Prior Meetings and Hearings

TDR Program and Gatekeeper Authorization

The Los Altos School District (LASD) transfer of development rights (TDR) program stems from years of coordination between the City and LASD on opportunities to support the creation of a new school in the San Antonio Precise Plan (SAPP) area, including adopted policies in the SAPP for measures like the TDR program.

On January 16, 2018, the City Council authorized the City Manager to execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City and LASD establishing the framework for the TDR program, allowing LASD to sell up to 610,000 square feet of transferable development rights that were not needed to build a school on the future school site. At the same meeting, Council also authorized City staff to begin review of several Gatekeeper requests for development projects proposing to utilize available TDR square footage, including this project.

The applicant, Joe Nootbar on behalf of MV Campus Owner, received Council authorization to submit an application, utilizing up to 125,000 square feet of TDRs at this project site, to construct a four-story office building and five-level parking garage and retain the other existing buildings on site (see Exhibit 1—City Council Report, January 16, 2018).

Development Review Committee

The Development Review Committee (DRC) reviewed the project on April 6, 2022 and discussed the proposed project and provided recommendations for site and architectural changes. DRC recommendations are summarized in the relevant sections below. No members of the public provided oral or written comments at the meeting.

Community Meeting

The applicant hosted a virtual community meeting on April 21, 2022. Three members of the public attended the meeting and provided supportive comments regarding proposed outdoor seating areas and raised concerns about the proposed project density and Heritage tree removals.

Project Overview

The proposed development includes a new three-story, approximately 125,000 square foot office building, utilizing the TDR square footage along with a new six-level parking structure (see Exhibit 3—Project Plans). The project is proposing different changes to the project than what was proposed as part of the Gatekeeper request. The project is proposing a reduction in the number of stories for the office building from four stories to three stories and an increase in the number of levels of the parking garage from five levels to six levels. Since the project is detailed with enhanced design and the same authorized square footage, staff is supportive of the proposed office building story reduction from four stories to three stories. Considering the location of the site surrounded by roadways, far distance to the nearest surrounding properties, and minor height-increase exception requested from the required 65' to 70'6", staff is supportive of the proposed parking garage story increase from five stories to six stories.

The project will retain the five existing two- to three-story office buildings located in the center of the site and construct the new buildings in existing surface parking areas. The new office building would be built in the northwest corner of the site (near the intersection of East Evelyn Avenue and Ferry-Morse Way) and the new parking structure in the southern portion of the site (along State Route 237, near the South Whisman Road/Ferry-Morse Way intersection). Existing surface parking areas on the east/north sides of the site would remain.

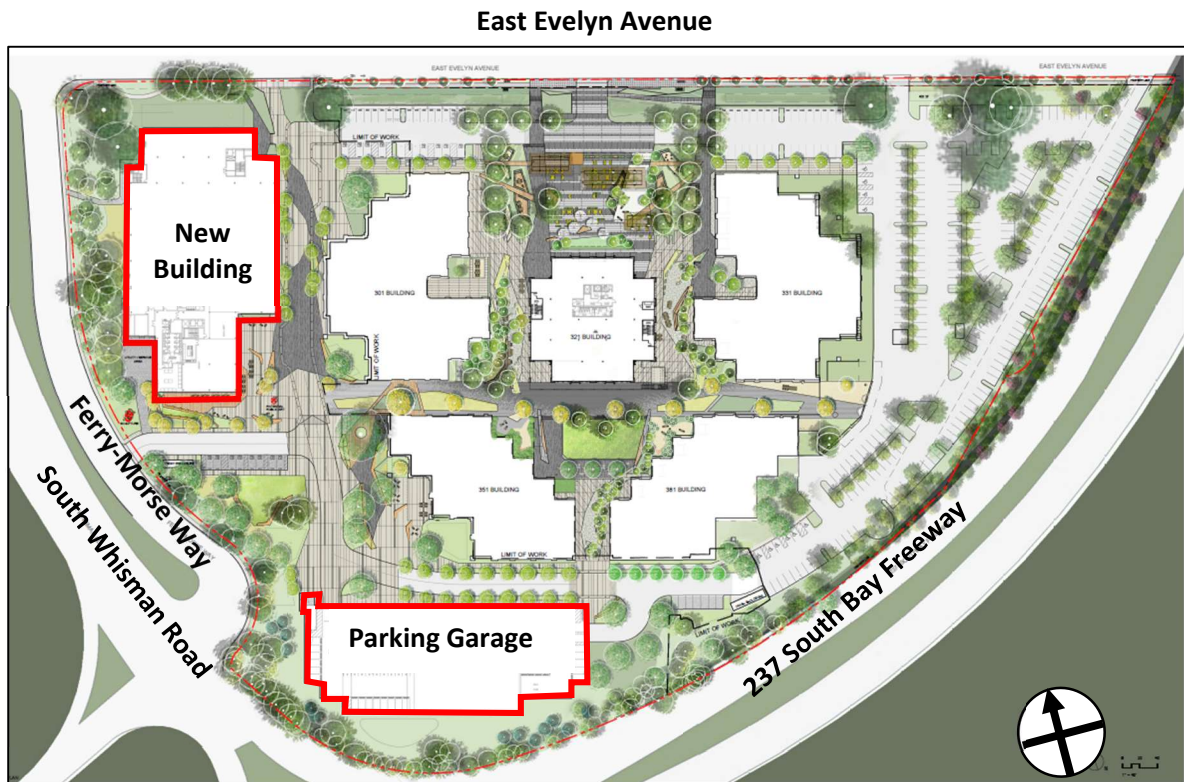


Figure 2: Site Plan

The applicant is proposing a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program to achieve an approximately 31% trip reduction by participating in the Mountain View Transportation Management Association (TMA), preferential carpool stalls, transit subsidies to employees, bike storage, and other measures.

The project includes a requested Provisional Use Permit to allow a 19% parking reduction to provide 0.8 space per 300 square feet in lieu of the required one space per 300 square feet of gross floor area. The proposed parking structure will consolidate and provide two-thirds of the site parking in six levels of naturally ventilated aboveground parking. The remaining one-third will be parked in the surface lot to the east. A parking study will be conducted as part of the review process and evaluate the proposed parking for the site, including the provision for a TDM program which reduces parking demand by promoting alternate modes of transportation.

DISCUSSION

General Plan and Zoning

The General Plan Land Use Designation for the project site is High-Intensity Office, which allows for a variety of office/R&D/scientific facilities and supporting retail and service uses

up to 1.0 floor area ratio (FAR) and accommodates the proposed development. No changes to the General Plan are requested as part of the project.

The project site is zoned P(29) (111 Ferry-Morse Way) Precise Plan, which solely applies to the project site and permits office, manufacturing, R&D, and industrial uses up to a maximum 0.35 FAR (see Exhibit 2—111 Ferry-Morse Way Precise Plan). The project includes amendments to the Precise Plan development standards for FAR, height, and setbacks to facilitate the proposed development.

	Exiting Precise Plan	Proposed Project
FAR	0.35	0.53
Office Setback	Ferry-Morse Way: 70' yard, 50% landscaped East Evelyn Avenue: 70' yard, 50% landscaped	Ferry-Morse Way: 49' to 70' yard, 70% landscaped East Evelyn Avenue: 55' to 70' yard, 70% landscaped
Office Height	4 stories/65'	3 stories/59'9"
Parking Setback	Ferry-Morse Way: 70' yard, 50% landscaped	Ferry-Morse Way: 55' to 70' yard, 70% landscaped
Parking Height	4 stories/65'	6 stories/70'6"

FAR: The proposed project would result in a sitewide FAR of 0.53, as a result of the TDR transfer, which exceeds the maximum 0.35 FAR currently allowed under the Precise Plan and requires a Precise Plan Amendment. Language that facilitates the TDR Program implementation, similar to language included in the East Whisman and San Antonio Precise Plans, is also proposed to be included in the Precise Plan.

Setback: Amendment to the Precise Plans setback requirements is also proposed in order to facilitate the project.

While the office building encroaches 15' into the 70' required yard along Evelyn Avenue, the project proposes to increase the landscape area to 70% overall, which has the effect of creating a balanced expression of building and landscape with some greater building presence on Evelyn Avenue. Additionally, the northwest corner of the new building is set further back to maintain and frame an existing majestic oak tree. Similarly, on Ferry-Morse Way, portions of the proposed building encroach into the 70' yard as much as 21', while other similarly sized portions step further back. Lastly, the garage structure encroaches just a few feet into the required 70' yard along Ferry-Morse Way, leaving significant landscape area along this frontage, including existing tree canopy to remain.

Parking Height: The proposed parking structure provides six stories of aboveground parking with a maximum height of 70'6" to the top of the penthouse roof, which exceeds the

2018 City Council authorization for a five-story parking garage and exceeds the Precise Plan 65' maximum height requirement.

The existing development standards were established when the Precise Plan was adopted in 1985 and reflect older suburban office campus design objectives. Considering the location of the site, distance to the nearest surrounding properties, minor height increase exception requested, and the limited nature of the encroachments, staff is generally supportive of the proposed FAR, height, and setback amendments. The proposed amendments are recommended by staff not only to facilitate the project and the TDR transfer, but also to modernize the Precise Plan standards to more closely reflect the direction and vision of the General Plan for this area.

EPC Question No. 1: Does the EPC support the proposed amendments to the Precise Plan?

Site and Landscape Design

The existing site design places vehicular access/parking around the periphery of the site with the areas between the existing office buildings accessible only through pedestrian walks with limited emergency vehicle access and improved with high-quality landscaping, pedestrian amenity spaces, and a significant central plaza. Staff recommends the proposed site design should create a similar walkable, pedestrian-oriented environment between the proposed building and existing buildings where a driveway is currently shown.

Since the original project submittal, the site plan has been revised to remove one curb cut along East Evelyn Avenue (to provide two versus three) based on Public Works requirements to make East Evelyn Avenue a more bike-friendly street with fewer conflict points. Planning staff also recommended removal of the on-site driveway between the new and old office buildings. However, the applicant has retained this driveway segment, feeling strongly that they need vehicle access through the

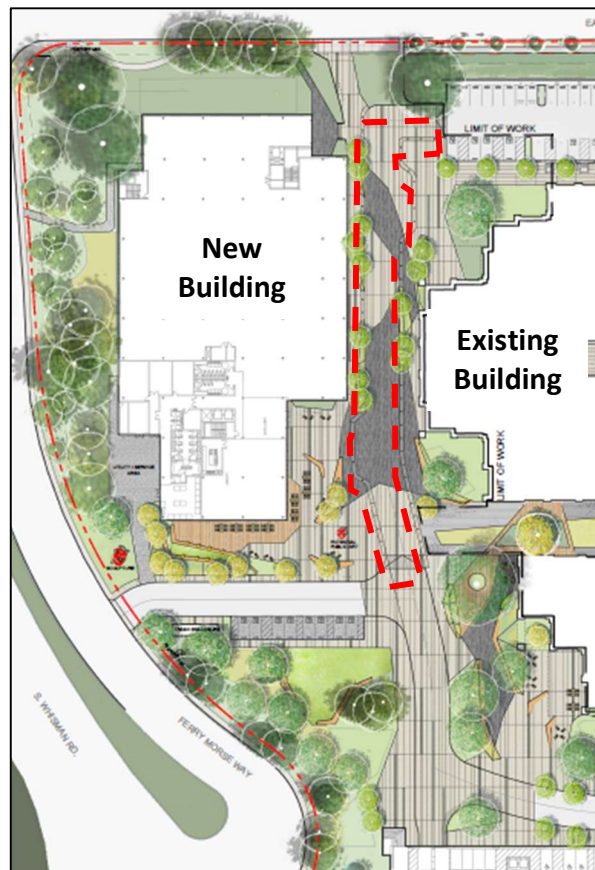


Figure 3: Site Plan-Driveway Location

However, the applicant has retained this driveway segment, feeling strongly that they need vehicle access through the

site and directly to this building for visitors. The proposed plans (see Sheet L.002) show a single-way vehicle drive with special pavers.

The DRC discussed the site plan extensively and shared staff's concerns with the location of the proposed driveway between the office buildings and the effectiveness of the site design in achieving the desired pedestrian-friendly environment. The DRC noted the driveway placement was inconsistent with existing site design strategies, which placed pedestrian-only spaces between on-site office buildings. Recommended site plan revisions include:

- Remove the driveway between the old and new buildings to prioritize pedestrian access/limit conflicts. If the removal is not supported by the EPC, at minimum, implement DRC-recommended analysis of options to modify the driveway design to be more pedestrian-friendly along the new office building; enhance the East Evelyn Avenue frontage and connection between the office buildings through a more actively programmed plaza based on the success of the redesigned central plaza facing East Evelyn Avenue; and strengthen the functionality and natural wayfinding for the existing on-site circulation around the site periphery.
- Update the Ferry-Morse Way entry driveway to the proposed parking structure, consistent with Precise Plan objectives to encourage primary vehicle access from Ferry-Morse Way, including relocation of the large trash enclosure at the site entry.
- Implement wayfinding strategies for vehicles coming from East Evelyn Avenue to easily find on-site parking and office buildings.

EPC Question No. 2: Does the EPC support the staff and DRC recommendations for site design revisions, including prioritized pedestrian access and amenity space?

Building Design

Office Building

Four of the existing office buildings are two-story buildings with distinctive gabled roof accents and upper-floor decks with trellises. The office building situated at the center of the site (and surrounded by the other four buildings) is a three-story building with a distinctive hipped roof. The proposed office building is three stories and includes second- and third-floor terraces as well as a rooftop garden area. The design features glass curtain walls with copper-colored mullion caps, copper-colored aluminum trellises, and gray precast panels to match the existing building's updated scheme.



Figure 4: Proposed Office Building

The proposed office building includes several features (such as strong trellis accents), materials, and colors from the existing office building palette, but employs a more contemporary style, including more plentiful windows to bring natural light and visual connection into the building work and gathering spaces.

Staff and the DRC generally support the overall design strategy and find the building to be an attractive addition to the site but recommends the design be refined to better emphasize certain focal features, such as main entry points, highly visible/key corners, common open spaces, and public amenity spaces. The proposed office facades should provide a stronger orientation, design character, and connection to adjacent street frontages, particularly the northeast corner. The DRC also identified some specific areas where the design could better reflect these objectives, including:

- Refine the main entry portal and adjacent plaza area to be more visually prominent and welcoming as befits a main entry.
- Study extending a trellis accent or similar projection at the northeast corner to make the building corner (with secondary entry point) a more prominent feature facing East Evelyn Avenue, along with site/landscape design features emphasizing the pedestrian adjacent entry point to the site.

- Study options to create a stronger and more independent entry to the secure bike room and locker area with facade revisions that balance activation of adjacent outdoor spaces with security of the bike facilities.
- Identify amenities, such as umbrellas and other landscape furniture, that will help make outdoor spaces be more hospitable and useful, particularly south-facing spaces.
- Review proportions of the trellises/overhangs on the roof decks above the main entry, which seem undersized, to ensure the building facade is complemented without detracting from the main entry design.

Parking Garage

The proposed parking structure will consolidate and provide two-thirds of the site parking in six levels of naturally ventilated aboveground parking. The proposed structure has a simple rectangular form, with exposed concrete parking structure and perforated aluminum panel screening. Solar photovoltaic panels would be installed on rooftop trellises to generate on-site electricity and provide shade for the top parking level. The remaining parking is proposed in the surface parking lot areas to the east and north of the existing office buildings and along the updated Ferry-Morse Way entry drive. Site access is provided from three driveway curb cuts: two along East Evelyn Avenue and one from Ferry-Morse Way.



Figure 5: Parking Structure

The perforated aluminum panels screen is very simple and employs a complementary color scheme but does not provide much visual interest and looks fairly flat as applied to the structure. The DRC discussion of the garage focused on the proposed perforated metal screening, including the following recommendations:

- Refine the perforated aluminum panels installation to create greater visual interest, shadows, and movement similar to reference photos provided by the applicant as design inspiration, which included a more varied pattern and different installation depth (offset from the garage structure).

- Study options to more strongly emphasize and differentiate the stairs and entrances at both north-facing garage corners to break up the long facades and provide more character. At the northwest corner, the DRC recommended more openness at the stairs to emphasize their appearance. At the northeast corner, the DRC recommended additional accent on the projecting deck/stair areas to provide more interesting character and better screen the garage structure.
- Evaluate the ground-floor design to ensure the structure and/or landscape design will help maintain an attractive pedestrian environment along adjacent pathways.

EPC Question No. 3: Does the EPC support the staff and DRC building design recommendations or have any comments on the proposed design of the office building or parking garage?

Tree Preservation

The Tree Diagram plan indicates 88 trees will be preserved, including 83 Heritage trees. Most of these trees are located outside the proposed development area. Based on current plans, 104 trees would be removed for the new development, including 32 Heritage trees. The significant tree buffer along Ferry-Morse Way and State Route 237 would remain. Of the trees to be removed, 33 are in poor condition, but most of the trees are proposed to be removed due to conflicts with office building/parking structure footprints or proposed paving and landscaping. Based on the current tree removal proposal, 138 total replacement trees would be required based on a 2:1 replacement requirement for the 33 Heritage tree removals and a 1:1 replacement requirement for the 72 non-Heritage trees. The project is currently proposing to plant 94 new trees.

Given tree preservation priorities in Mountain View, staff and the DRC recommend the applicant work closely with City staff to study changes to the proposed paving/landscape plan to preserve as many trees as possible, particularly trees rated “moderate health,” and revise the tree replacement plan to add trees with a focus on California-native species.

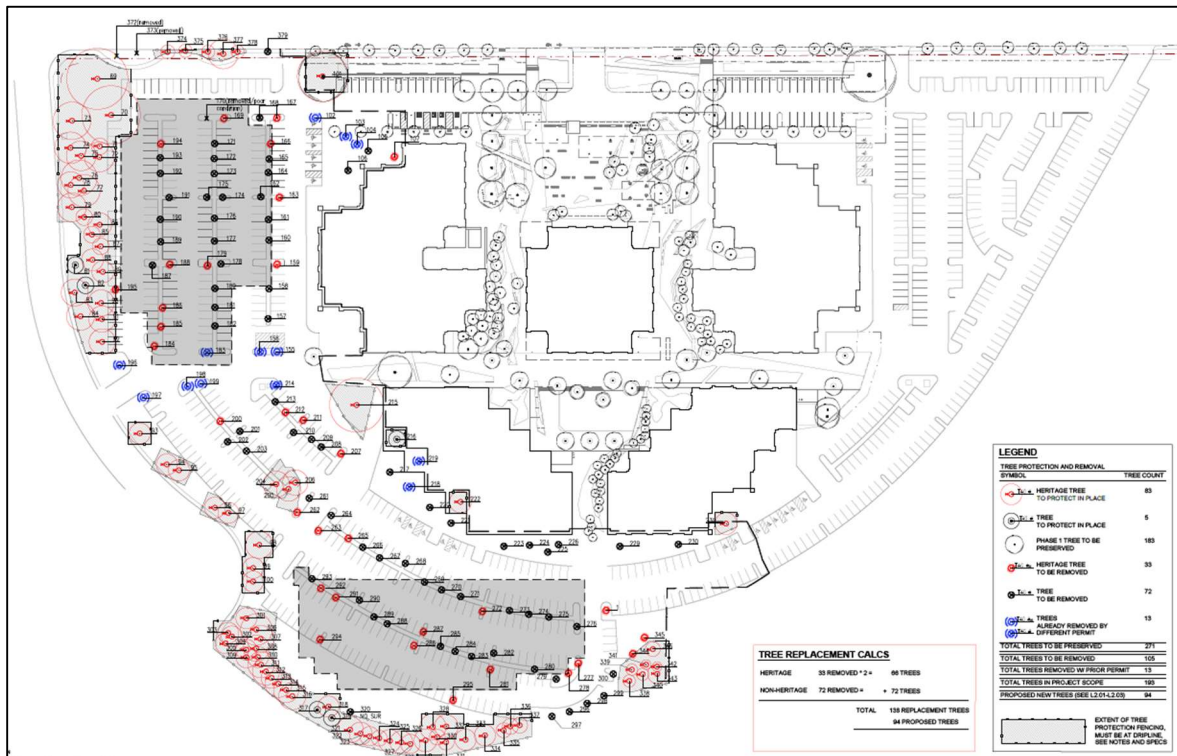


Figure 6: Tree Diagram

EPC Question No. 4: Does the EPC support studying minor changes to the building/garage footprints, proposed paving, and landscaping to preserve trees as identified by staff and/or have any additional comments on the proposed tree removal/planting plan?

CONCLUSION

This Study Session gives the EPC the opportunity to provide early input on key project topics to guide the applicant and staff in refining the project design through the remainder of the development review process. The project will return to the EPC for a formal recommendation to the City Council once the development review process and environmental review are complete.

Staff requests EPC feedback on the following questions and any other project-related comments:

1. Does the EPC support the proposed amendments to the Precise Plan?
2. Does the EPC support the staff and DRC recommendations for site design revisions, including prioritized pedestrian access and amenity space?

3. Does the EPC support the staff and DRC building design recommendations or have any comments on the proposed design of the office building or parking garage?
4. Does the EPC support studying minor changes to the building/garage footprints, proposed paving, and landscaping to preserve trees as identified by staff and/or have any additional comments on the proposed tree removal/planting plan?

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EK/4/CDD
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- Exhibits:
1. [City Council Report, January 16, 2018](#)
 2. [111 Ferry-Morse Way Precise Plan](#)
 3. Project Plans