

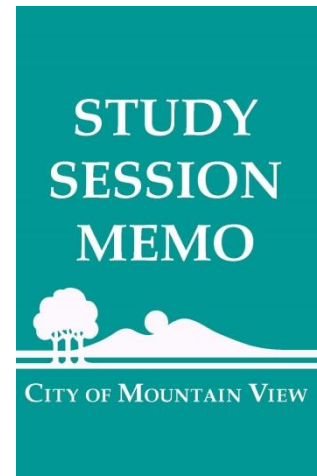
DATE: January 21, 2014

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Stephanie Williams, Senior Planner
Peter Gilli, Zoning Administrator
Randal Tsuda, Community Development
Director

VIA: Daniel H. Rich, City Manager

TITLE: 801 El Camino Real West (Greystar)



PURPOSE

The purpose of this Study Session is to provide the City Council with an update on the proposed mixed-use project at 801 El Camino Real West and receive feedback on the project, particularly building massing and parking, to assist staff in the continued review of the project.

BACKGROUND

This report contains a summary of the comments from the Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) Study Session on September 11, 2013, the City Council Study Session on September 24, 2013, and an analysis of the revised formal plans that were submitted in November 2013.

Project Site

The project site is referred to as "801 El Camino Real West" and consists of nine parcels totaling 2.38 acres on the southwest corner of El Camino Real and Castro Street. The project site is currently developed with 22,380 square feet of commercial buildings and private parking spaces. On May 14, 2013, the City Council authorized execution of a Purchase and Sale Agreement with Greystar for the sale of a City parking lot, should Council ultimately approve a development permit for the proposed project. The Agreement does not obligate the Council to approve the development project.



Location Map

Project Description

The applicant, Greystar, is proposing to rezone the 2.38-acre project site from the CRA (Commercial/Residential-Arterial) District to the P (Planned Community) District and redevelop the site with 164 apartment units in three- and four-story buildings over underground parking garages, approximately 10,800 square feet of commercial space along El Camino Real and a portion of Castro Street, and a public plaza on the corner of El Camino Real and Castro Street (see Attachment 1 – Formal Project Plans).

The applicant is working to retain the existing tenants on site and has committed to providing long-term leases to Rose's International Market, Tanya's Hair Design, Le's Alterations, Peet's Coffee & Tea, and Sufi Coffee Shop and Cultural Center. The applicant is also working on providing temporary facilities for some tenants in the vicinity during construction. Gochi's Japanese Fusion Tapas restaurant is not included in the proposed project at this time because all the commercial space has been leased by other existing tenants. The City's Economic Development staff is assisting Gochi's with finding a new location for their restaurant in Mountain View.

EPC Study Session Summary

The EPC reviewed the proposed project at a Study Session on September 11, 2013 (see Attachment 2 – Environmental Planning Commission Study Session Staff Report, September 11, 2013). The EPC was generally supportive of the redevelopment of the project site with a new mixed-use project; however, they raised issues with the scale of the project and recommended changes or more studies to ensure circulation and building massing is appropriately addressed. The following is a summary of the EPC's comments from the Study Session:

- Supports the efforts to retain the existing tenants.
- Acknowledged that the project site is a key location along El Camino Real and a gateway to the downtown, and that the project design should be modified to be iconic and representative of its gateway status.
- Building heights should transition from taller heights closer to El Camino Real to lower heights along Castro Street as you get closer to the residential neighborhood.
- Significant building step-downs should be provided so that the heights of the new buildings are no more than one story taller than the adjacent residential buildings.

- The design of the plaza on the corner of El Camino Real and Castro Street should create an active and pleasant environment for people, which has not been provided on the other three corners of this intersection.
- The setback along El Camino Real should be increased to at least 18' from the curb line.
- There should be a comprehensive study of vehicular circulation into and around the site to reduce the potential for cut-through traffic on Sonia Way and Harpster Drive, including modified medians along Castro Street and consideration of alternative vehicular entrances/exits on Castro Street and possibly El Camino Real.
- Traditional architecture should be considered to help better transition and relate the project to the adjacent residential neighborhood.
- The determination of parking supply should account for the existing usage of the City parking lot by nearby businesses.

Twenty-six (26) people from the public spoke at the Study Session regarding the project. Most of the speakers were not in support of the project citing that it was too tall, had too many units, that there was not enough parking for both the commercial uses as well as the residential units, and are concerned with potential cut-through traffic on Sonia Way and Harpster Drive. Some of the speakers were supportive of the redevelopment of the site but requested that it be modified to address the above concerns.

Council Study Session Summary

Council reviewed the proposed project at a Study Session on September 24, 2013 (see Attachment 3 – Council Study Session Memorandum, September 24, 2013). Staff asked three additional questions to Council which were follow-up questions to the EPC comments. Council comments were similar to the EPC recommendations regarding design and requests for additional analysis with the formal application. Council's responses to these questions and other project comments are summarized below.

Council Questions:

- Question 1: Should the proposed plaza be required to be moved off of El Camino Real, or should the concept of the corner plaza be studied further?

Response 1: Council stated that with thoughtful design an active and comfortable plaza could be designed without changing the building configuration and a corner plaza should be studied further.

- Question 2: Should a mandatory three-story height limit be placed on the buildings adjacent to the residential neighborhood, can the concept of greater fourth-story setbacks and building step-downs be studied further, or does the Council have other direction related to neighborhood compatibility?

Response 2: Council direction was a mandatory three-story height limit should not be placed on the buildings along Castro Street adjacent to the residential neighborhood. However, the design needs to be modified to include greater fourth-story building step-downs to provide a more sensitive massing transition to the existing residential neighborhood.

- Question 3: Does the Council have additional direction on site design and circulation?

Response 3: Council direction was there should be a comprehensive study of vehicular circulation into and around the site to reduce the potential for cut-through traffic on Sonia Way and Harpster Drive; the project entrance/exit to the residential building should be aligned with Victor Way; and another project access point along El Camino Real should not be included in the project design.

Other Project Comments:

- Supportive of the redevelopment of the site with a new mixed-use project which aligns with the General Plan's vision for development along the El Camino Real Corridor.
- Traditional architecture should be considered to help better transition and relate the project to the adjacent residential neighborhood.
- Supports the efforts to retain the existing tenants and would like to see Gochi's Japanese Fusion Tapas included in the new building if possible.
- A parking study should be done which includes an analysis of the current parking demand on the site based on parking counts as well as the projected parking demand. Additional parking spaces should be considered for the commercial portion of the project.

- Paving and access improvements to the existing public alley should be included as part of the project, including the improvement of the alley entrance/exit along El Camino Real closer to Miramonte Avenue.

Twenty-three (23) people from the public spoke at the Study Session regarding the project. Most of the speakers were not in support of the project for the same reasons as were stated at the EPC Study Session and summarized above.

DISCUSSION

Project Summary

The applicant revised the plans to address Council comments and submitted a formal application in November 2013. The following is a summary of the revisions:

- The number of apartment units was decreased from 175 units to 164 units.
- The commercial space was increased from 10,500 square feet to 10,800 square feet.
- The residential building vehicular entryway along Castro Street was relocated from the southern end of the building to the center of the building and aligned with Victor Way.
- By moving the vehicular entryway from the southern end of the Castro Street building to the center of the building, the first two floors of the project were extended towards the south which creates a two-story building step-down along Castro Street.
- The outdoor pool was removed from the plan, as requested by the adjacent neighbors due to potential noise concerns.
- Sufi Coffee Shop and Cultural Center was relocated from a tenant space along El Camino Real to a space along Castro Street and Rose's International Market floor plan was expanded along the El Camino Real frontage.

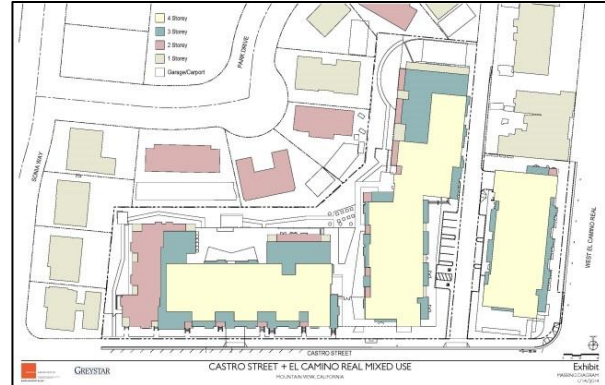


Revised Site Plan

- The fourth floors of the buildings have been set back from the lower floors on all three buildings as shown in the massing diagrams below.



Previous Massing Diagram



Revised Massing Diagram

- The building setback along El Camino Real was increased to 18' to the curb to allow for wider sidewalks along El Camino Real.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends Council provide feedback on the project, particularly building massing and parking, to assist staff in the continued review of the project.

Building Design

Staff believes that the changes made since the City Council Study Session move the project design in the right direction but significant architectural and massing changes are still necessary. Staff is requesting Council feedback on the proposed massing and height transitions which will help inform the design direction through the Development Review Committee (DRC) process.

At the last Study Session, Council specified that a mandatory three-story height limit should not be placed on the residential building along Castro Street but the design needed to include greater fourth-story setbacks, building step-downs, and a more sensitive massing transition to the existing residential neighborhood. Greystar revised the plans to reduce the massing of all the buildings in the project and set back the fourth floors from the lower floors. A significant amount of the massing reductions and building step-downs were done to the elevations facing the adjacent residential neighborhood to the west, where ground-floor setbacks range between 20' and 30' to the property line and 40' to 50' on the upper floors. Staff has design recommendations for the elevations facing the residential neighborhood that will be relayed through the

DRC process but believes the massing revisions provide an adequate transition to the lower density residential area.

Staff recommends further reductions in upper floor massing and greater building articulation along the Castro Street frontage, as shown in the red highlighted areas in Figure 3.



Figure 3

The applicant also moved the vehicular entryway from the southern end of the Castro Street building to the center of the building and extended the first two floors towards the south which creates a two-story building step-down along Castro Street. Staff believes that this change reduces the perceived massing of the building as it transitions towards the south but that an additional portion of the middle of the building along Castro Street should also be set back approximately 30' to visually break up the long building facade, as shown in the red highlighted area in Figure 4.



Figure 4

Question 1: Does Council think that the fourth-floor setbacks, buildings step-downs, and massing reductions are sufficient or should additional reductions be required as recommended by staff?

Parking

Throughout the review process, a significant number of people have expressed that the number of parking spaces being proposed by the applicant for the residential and commercial components of the project will result in overflow parking into the surrounding neighborhoods. The following is a summary of the proposed parking for the project and staff is requesting Council feedback on the following parking-related questions:

Residential Parking

The project utilizes the City's model parking standard for the residential portion of the project which requires one parking space per bedroom and is inclusive of guest parking spaces. The project proposes 204 spaces for the residential units which meets the one

space per bedroom requirement. The model parking standard has been utilized for other recently approved and built high-density residential projects. Based on the data from these high-density residential projects, staff believes that the one space per bedroom requirement will provide adequate parking for this project.

Question 2: Does Council accept the use of the model parking standard for this project?

Commercial Parking

The project also provides 78 commercial parking spaces which meet the City's Zoning Code requirement of one parking space per 180 square feet plus one parking space per 2.5 outdoor patio seats. Part of the project includes a public City parking lot which would be sold to the developer for use in the project. Staff recommends that the project provide retail parking to accommodate the existing public parking usage on-site as well as the on-site commercial users of the Greystar project. A parking study which evaluates the existing parking demand and utilization for the site, as well as the project's future parking demand, is being prepared by a transportation consultant hired by the City. The evaluation will allow staff to determine whether 78 parking spaces will be enough to accommodate the existing public parking lot usage as well as the commercial businesses in the project.

Question 3: Does Council expect that the project provide public parking to accommodate the current use of the public parking lot as well as the commercial project tenants?

Environmental Review

The environmental review process has begun and an EIR will be prepared to evaluate potential environmental impacts associated with the project. The public draft of the EIR is anticipated to be available in the spring.

NEXT STEPS

Following feedback from the City Council at this Study Session, staff and the applicant will have the necessary information to continue the development review and EIR process, including review of the project design by the DRC. Final Council consideration is anticipated in November 2014.

PUBLIC NOTICING

Agenda posting and mailing to property owners within 1,000' of the project site and to interested parties on file with the Community Development Department.

SW-PG-RT/7/CAM
818-01-21-14SS-E

- Attachments:
1. Formal Project Plans
 2. [Environmental Planning Commission Study Session Staff Report, September 11, 2013](#)
 3. [Council Study Session Memorandum, September 24, 2013](#)