

CITY OF FOLSOM
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
September 21, 2011

CALL TO ORDER PLANNING COMMISSION: Commissioners: Chair Greg Eldridge, Vice Chair Ross Jackson, Dave Benevento, Thomas Scott; John Arnaz , Brian Martell

ABSENT: Commissioner Lance Klug

CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: None

MINUTES: Minutes of September 7, 2011 were approved as submitted.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **PN11-165 Granite City Apartments, Planned Development Permit, 1150 Sibley Street**

Associate Planner Kei Zushi discussed the background of the project, stating that in August of 2008, the Willow Creek Village project was approved by the Planning Commission. A Traffic Impact Study, Acoustic Study and Parking study were done for the project. The site is currently being used as storage for solid waste containers, but they will be relocated prior to the project construction beginning. The project consists of 80 affordable rental units consisting of 62 Low, 17 Very Low and 1 Unrestricted unit for the on-site apartment manager. There will be a total of 4 buildings; three buildings will have 24-plexes and one building will be an 8-plex. There will also be an outside pool and tot lot. The applicant is requesting reduction in rear setbacks from 20 feet to 5 feet. There is also a reduction in the number of parking spaces from 153 to 140. A vicinity map and aerial photo were shared with the Commission showing the location of the project and adjacent uses. A site plan was also shared with the Commission. Access to the site will be located across Levy Road and a secondary driveway located on the southern half of the project frontage was pointed out for the Commission. A raised median will be constructed along the centerline of Sibley Street; however there will be a opening in the median so that emergency vehicles could make left-turn movements.

Currently, the entire site is owned by the Redevelopment Agency who proposes to adjust the property line to the northeast in order for the City to continue to own the bike trail area. The City will deed the rest of the property to the owner of the apartment complex. As a result of this adjustment, two buildings will have a 5-foot setback from the southwest property line. Locations for two pedestrian / bicycle connections were pointed out for the Commission.

Two sets of color schemes for the buildings were shared with the Commission. The site does not have any design standards or criteria. The applicant is proposing a number of vertical and horizontal offsets along the elevation and color scheme are primarily earth tone, which is consistent with the existing open space and industrial developments in the vicinity.

Staff prepared an Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project and all the mitigation measures have been incorporated into the Conditions of Approval. Staff also reviewed the proposal for consistency with the General Plan. The project does not meet the requirement of 30% open space; however, there are two other policies that are in conflict with the first policy. Staff has determined that the project is not subject to the 30% open space policy.

A Traffic Impact Analysis was prepared for the previous project (Willow Creek Village) and because of the similarity in scale and number of units, staff has determined that no off-site mitigation is required. The project will be required to pay a fair-share contribution to the signalization of the intersection of Levy Road / Sibley Street.

As part of the project, several frontage improvement will be completed including, a portion of a continuous turn lane; two southbound vehicle lanes; an on-street bicycle lane; and a six-foot-wide sidewalk. A raised median will also be constructed. Both driveways will provide full access for emergency vehicles and "no parking" signs will be located along Sibley Street. Staff is recommending approval of the deviation from the parking code. A parking plan will be submitted to the City for approval and Condition 64 requires that the parking plan be modified should a parking shortage occur.

The applicant proposed a six-foot masonry wall along the north property line, but a previous project (adjacent to Gekkeikan) was required to build an eight-foot wall so staff is requiring the applicant to work with Gekkeikan to build just one wall of the same height (Condition 46).

Assembly Bills are under legal proceedings and if the Agency is legally prohibited from transferring the property, then this approval will become null and void (Condition 66).

Photographs of the site were shared with the Commission. Staff recommends approval of the project.

Commissioner Arnaz asked if guest parking was considered in the parking calculation. Associate Planner Zushi replied there is a minimum of 16 parking spaces provided for guest.

Director Miller added that typically parking wasn't as high of a demand in these type of projects. Staff was trying to locate these projects a reasonable distance from mass transit to encourage more transit use and not over park these projects.

In response to Commissioner Scott, Director Miller replied that very low-income is 0-50% of county median and it is at different levels for different family sizes. If your maximum occupancy is two per bedroom and you have a two-bedroom unit, you will probably going to have four people in the unit. Those in the very-low category are folks that are probably in the service industries in the community who wouldn't qualify to be in the project unless they have a good work history.

Planner Zushi added that the applicant provided data for the household medians - average median income, for a four-person household, would be \$45,000 / year.

Commissioner Scott voiced concern about parking and traffic flow and felt that the road actually needed to be widened. He further voiced concern about the elimination of the 30% open space requirement.

Director Miller stated that one of the first things staff did on this site was a lot line adjustment to provide for a bike path and landscaping. That took away from the size of project that could be developed – that could be credited toward the development. When reviewing projects that are 100% affordable, staff was pressured very heavily by the Department of Housing and Community Development to do away with all design review because communities use that to discriminate against affordable housing. Staff stayed firm that these projects needed to be treated like every other project in the City and maintain a high standard of review.

In response to Commissioner Scott concerning Condition of Approval 66, City Attorney Cline explained that the references to AB 26 and 27 allows for the elimination of Redevelopment Agencies and the opt-in provisions. A law suit has been filed associated with these two bills and the Supreme Court has stayed the implementation of a mass majority of both of these bills with the exception of some provision of AB 26. AB 26 says that you cannot transfer off properties, sell them, or enter into agreements associated with them. This is a land use entitlement and the City is allowed to do that but ultimately the Supreme Court could make a decision that could have an impact on the City's ability to transfer property.

In response to Chair Eldridge, City Attorney Cline replied that if the Redevelopment Agency went away, then an oversight board would be created who would be looking at selling properties off and the funds from the sale of redevelopment properties would go to the State. Folsom intends, to the greatest extent possible, to retain their Redevelopment Agency because of its desire to support affordable housing.

In response to Commissioner Scott with regard to traffic, Director Miller explained that there was a significant amount of traffic study done when this project originally came through process. There are some improvements planned to occur along the street.

Principal Civil Engineer Krahn added that when the project was originally approved in 2008, it was intended that the improvements would move forward at the same time. Currently the funding is not available; however, this project with their improvements will be creating safer access onto Sibley and at the intersection. The project is not being conditioned to install a four-way stop at the intersection – this is something that the City will look at in the future as traffic increases and some of these projects come on board.

Chair Eldridge pointed out that the additional traffic counts generated by this project alone do not warrant the installation of any sort of signalization/signage.

Commissioner Martell added that he had some of the same concerns as Commissioner Scott. In 2008, he requested information on pedestrian flow as well as traffic flow, and this information has still not been provided.

Director Miller and Principal Civil Engineer Krahn explained the project's traffic flow and pedestrian access / flow for the project and addressed the Commission's concerns.

Chair Eldridge asked for clarification as to what was approved in 2008 as it compares to this project. Planner Zushi explained that the units in 2008 were smaller because they included 10, 3-story buildings compared to 4, 3-story buildings in the current proposal. The 5-foot setback was a trade off in order to have the connection to the bike path.

In response to Chair Eldridge noted that the buildings were very massive and it didn't seem to be at the same standard as other apartment complexes within the City in terms of how the building looks.

Director Miller stated that the things staff looks for is the change in the roof line, balconies, and there was a subtle variation in color - the materials are conservative. The Commission is going to see more buildings that are 3-story because of the density requirements for affordable housing.

There was a brief discussion with regard to the architecture of the buildings and it was decided that the project would come back for Commission to take a final look at the materials and architecture of the buildings.

In response to Commissioner Benevento, Planner Zushi pointed out the location of the nearest bus stop.

Ardie Zahedani, RCH Group, stated that their company is one of the largest affordable housing developers in the nation; they construct, own, and manage nearly 6,000 units. This is their first project in Folsom and is one of the smallest projects that they done. When they approached this design, they had two objectives in mind, based on direction from staff and a number of affordable housing policies, one was to try to get as many units as possible and to construct it so that it was indistinguishable from a market-rate project. When you drive by this completed project, you will not be able to tell that it was 100% affordable. The project will have an on-site, full-time management person. With regard to parking, they would be happy to come back with a parking management plan but felt that 1.7 spaces per household were sufficient. It was hope that construction would begin in February and completed by the end of next year. With regard to traffic, they knew that the improvements would be temporary - Sibley was going to be widened so they couldn't spend a lot of money on improvements now.

In response to Commissioner Jackson, Mr. Zahedani explained that the applications are verified for income and taxes and reviewed/audited on a regular basis. As a tenant's income increases, they would not be able to renew their lease. The threshold for qualifying for one of the units would increase as inflation increases (based on census figures).

Mr. Zahedani pointed out the location of the lot for Commissioner Benevento.

Chair Eldridge opened the Public Hearing; no one came forward to speak so the Public Hearing was closed.

Commissioner Arnaz didn't feel that it was the best 3-story building that the Commission has seen, but it does have nice architectural articulation based on the use.

Chair Eldridge requested that the applicant look at ways to make the architecture better (to address scale), he felt that the project would be improved. He also would like to see samples of the materials that were going to be used.

Commissioner Jackson added that he thought the view from Sibley Street was important as far as the architecture. He suggested that improvements be made to the Sibley side only. He felt that the wrought iron fencing would inhibit tenants from illegally parking to drop off groceries, picking up a child, etc.

COMMISSIONER MARTELL MOVED TO ADOPT THE MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION AND MITIGATION MONITORING PROGRAM FOR THE GRANITE CITY APARTMENTS (PN11-165) AT 1150 SIBLEY STREET AS ILLUSTRATED IN ATTACHMENTS 3 THROUGH 8; AND MOVED TO APPROVE THE PLANNED DEVELOPMENT PERMIT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF GRANITE CITY APARTMENTS (PN11-165) ON 3.9 ACRES AT 1150 SIBLEY STREET WITH 80 AFFORDABLE RENTAL UNITS WITH FOUR, THREE-STORY BUILDINGS AS ILLUSTRATED ON ATTACHMENTS 3 THROUGH 8 WITH THE FOLLOWING FINDINGS AND CONDITIONS: GENERAL FINDINGS "A" AND "B," CEQA FINDINGS "C" THROUGH "F," PLANNED DEVELOPMENT PERMIT FINDINGS "G" THROUGH "M"; AND CONDITIONS 1 THROUGH 67, WITH THE ADDITION OF CONDITION 68 TO REQUIRE SATELITE DISHES BE SCREENED AT A LOWER ELEVATION WITH MATERIALS APPROVED BY STAFF AND THAT THE SIBLEY STREET FRONTAGE DESIGN BE RESUBMITTED TO STAFF AND BROUGHT BACK TO THE COMMISSION FOR APPROVAL.

CHAIR ELDRIDGE SECONDED THE MOTION WHICH CARRIED WITH THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES:	ARNAZ, JACKSON, BENEVENTO, MARTELL, ELDRIDGE, SCOTT
NOES:	NONE
ABSTAIN:	NONE
ABSENT:	KLUG

REPORTS:

Planning Commission/Director:

Director Miller stated that staff would be bringing a presentation to the commission regarding the latest RHNA numbers; it will give a preview of what will be happening in the next Housing Element update.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Michelle Parks, Administrative Assistant

APPROVED:

CHAIR GREG ELDRIDGE