

STUDY SESSION OF THE FOSTER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

Council Chambers – 620 Foster City Boulevard -- Foster City

MINUTES

NOVEMBER 19, 2013

1. CALL TO ORDER

At 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Dyckman

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Avram, Pattum, Werden, Williams and Chairman Dyckman

Staff Present: Curtis Banks, Community Development Director; Jean Eisberg, Consulting Planner, Urban Planning Partners, Inc.

3. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

1. REVIEW AND DISCUSS THE SITE PLAN AND ARCHITECTURAL PLANS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN/USE PERMIT FOR THE FIRST PHASE OF THE CHESS HATCH MASTER PLAN. THE PROJECT CONSISTS OF APPROXIMATELY 600,000 SQUARE FEET OF OFFICE, BIOTECHNOLOGY OR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT USES IN TWO BUILDINGS ON 8.9 ACRES OF THE 11.3 ACRE SITE OCCUPIED BY 1159-1191 CHESS DRIVE; APN: 094-010-500 AND 094-010-510. THE PLAN INCLUDES TWO TOWER BUILDINGS WITH HEIGHTS RANGING FROM 9 STORIES TO 12 STORIES AND TWO SEPARATE PARKING GARAGES WITH HEIGHTS RANGING FROM 4 TO 7 STORIES - UP-13-004

Consulting planners presented staff comments/recommendations on the site, landscaping, and architectural plans and the applicant's architect highlighted key features of the project plans. No residents spoke at the meeting. Below is a summary of the discussion.

Site Plan

- Planning Commissioners generally supported the Garage A optional site plan, which shifts the garage 6 feet closer to Chess Drive, and expressed a willingness to allow the design team to determine the precise setback within reason and if a rationale is provided.

Architectural Plans

- Planning Commissioners generally supported the height of the buildings; angled building orientation; massing; and materials and colors.
- Planning Commissioners generally agreed that the experience of passersby traveling along Foster City Boulevard and the entrance at Chess Drive/Foster City Boulevard corner need to be more identifiable and attractive. Commissioners provided suggestions, including: an iconic element (beyond just landscaping or a sculpture) at the corner to soften the view of Garage A as the first visible element of the project.

- Several Planning Commissioners expressed that each tower did not adequately define a clear top on each elevation. Additionally, several Commissioners suggested that the base and entries should be refined to clarify the primary entrances and paths between the garages and the tower lobbies, and create a more inviting entry.
- Several Planning Commissioners commented on the level of articulation in the towers. At least one Planning Commissioner questioned that the graduated mullion depths would be visible from afar and would provide sufficient variation in the façade; while another Commissioners supported this subtle articulation. Another Planning Commissioner suggested more horizontal variation that reflects the uniqueness of the angled orientation of the towers.

Landscape and Circulation Plans

- Planning Commissioners supported the overall landscaping, including the garage screening trees, and preservation of trees adjacent to Highway 92, except for the Eucalyptus trees which at least one Commissioner recommended for removal.
- At least one Commissioner supported incorporating a green screen or living wall on the garages. Another Commissioner questioned the use of grass, given current/potential drought conditions.
- Several Planning Commissioners expressed concern about the tight turn-around in the front drop-off area.

Other

- At least one Planning Commissioner expressed concern about displacement of small business in the existing buildings.

The Planning Commission requested that signage, including the plans for rooftop signage, should be reviewed by City staff and the Planning Commission at a future meeting.

2. REVIEW AND DISCUSS THE SITE AND ARCHITECTURAL PLANS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR A 66-UNIT AFFORDABLE SENIOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT WITH APPROXIMATELY 10,000 SQUARE FEET OF GROUND FLOOR COMMERCIAL LOCATED ON PARCEL 15 OF THE FOSTER SQUARE SITE (FORMALLY KNOWN AS THE 15 ACRE SITE) LOCATED BETWEEN CITY HALL AND THE NORTH PENINSULA JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER- MIDPEN HOUSING - APN: 094-471-100 UP-13-007

Consulting planners presented an overview of the site, landscaping, and architectural plans; and staff comments/recommendations. The applicant's team highlighted key features of the project plans. No residents spoke at the meeting. Below is a summary of the discussion.

- Planning Commissioners would like to see a stronger connection to surrounding uses, including to the North Peninsula Jewish Campus (NPJC) and across Shell Drive to Leo Ryan Park and other public facilities. This should be achieved through the site's architecture, identity, and sightlines between the site and these other uses.

- Planning Commissioners would like to see the overall design of the building improved so that it better reflects the prominence of this parcel within Foster Square and the city as a whole, and provides a more attractive location for potential retail tenants and customers—especially since this building could be the first constructed. Planning Commissioners generally felt that the building design was too plain and rectilinear. Specific recommendations by one or more Planning Commissioners were as follows:
 - Reconsider the thin columns along the arcade and provide a stronger base for individual retail improvement plans
 - Add more definition to the corners facing the Town Square Plaza
 - Add more variety to the façades and more articulation overall, such as through materials selection; projections and shade structures; balconies; and other architectural elements
 - Acknowledge the level of articulation and the building heights in the adjacent civic buildings, specifically City Hall and the NPJC, to create a cohesive design
 - Add elements to the west-facing façade, facing the for-sale units, to create more architectural interest on the rear of the building
 - Relocate or obscure the service entry on the east-facing façade so that it does not disrupt the retail streetscape; consider whether it could be relocated to the west side of the building and accessed from the service driveway
 - Reconsider how the building relates to the curve of the Balclutha Circle roundabout, through the building design, landscaping, 2nd floor terrace, or other means; and consider a canopy at the drop-off entrance on the roundabout
 - Continue to refine the distinction between the private nature of the residential entrance and the public connection and architecture of the retail component of the project, which needs to draw in customers from the NPJC and Foster City Boulevard
 - Consider built examples from Concord and Pleasanton shown by the applicant’s design team, which appear more interesting than the proposed project

Respond to staff recommendations in the 11/19/13 staff report in the next iteration of the design

4. STATEMENTS AND REQUESTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

None

5. ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 9:45 p.m. to a Regular Meeting, November 21, 2013, Council Chambers, 620 Foster City Boulevard, Foster City, California.

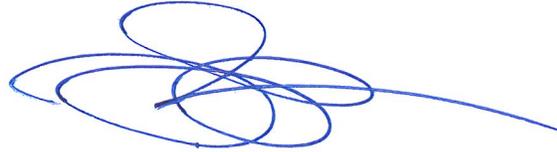
PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Planning Commission of the City of Foster City at a Regular Meeting thereof held on December 5, 2013 by the following vote:

AYES, COMMISSIONERS:

NOES, COMMISSIONERS:

ABSTAIN, COMMISSIONERS:

ABSENT, COMMISSIONERS:



DAN DYCKMAN, CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:



CURTIS BANKS, SECRETARY