



DATE: June 26, 2019

AGENDA ITEM # 4

AGENDA REPORT

TO: Complete Streets Commission

FROM: Steve Golden, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: 444-450 First Street – New Multiple-Family Development

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend approval of Multi-Family Design Review Application D19-0001 to the Planning Commission subject to the staff recommendations

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This is a Design Review application for a new multiple-family development on a 0.34-acre site at 444-450 First Street. The proposal Project includes 26 condominium units in a four-story building with two levels of underground parking. The existing site, which is located on the southwest side of First Street between South San Antonio Road and Lyell Street, includes a 10,000 square-foot commercial building. The majority of the building is one-story, however, approximately 20% of the building footprint is comprised of two stories. The existing building is accessed by three driveways from First Street with surface parking in the front of the building. The project site is designated as Downtown Commercial in the General Plan and zoned Commercial Downtown/Multiple Family (CD/R3).

The Project's Traffic Study is included as Attachment A and a condensed version of the project plans that focuses on the project's bicycle, pedestrian, circulation and parking amenities is included as Attachment B.

BACKGROUND

The role of the Complete Streets Commission (CSC) is to be an advisory body to City Council on bicycle, pedestrian, parking and traffic matters. For development applications, the Commission's role is not specifically defined, but in order to be consistent with the past role of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission, the Commission should review and provide a recommendation on the elements of the application that pertain to bicycle, pedestrian, parking and traffic issues.

With regard to traffic analysis, the Circulation Element in the General Plan includes an implementing program (C8) that outlines the criteria for reviewing traffic and circulation for new development as follows:

Evaluate development proposals and design roadway and access improvements based on established Level of Service standards and vehicle trip distribution to minimize impact on local residential and collector streets:

- 1) Require public review of any development project or other proposal that causes an intersection to degrade by one or more levels of service (e.g., LOS A to B, LOS B to D);

- 2) Require a transportation analysis for all development projects resulting in 50 or more net new daily trips. The analysis shall identify potential impacts to intersection and roadway operations, project access, and non-automobile travel modes, and shall identify feasible improvements or project modifications to reduce or eliminate impacts. Impact significance should be consistent with the criteria maintained by the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority. City staff should have the discretion to require focused studies regarding access, sight distance, and other operational and safety issues;
- 3) As part of the development review process, the primary access for major traffic generators should be established on arterial roadways, and overall access should be designed to minimize traffic intrusion to residential neighborhoods; and
- 4) Only after preparation of an environmental impact report with associated findings, accept Level of Service E or F operations at City-monitored signalized intersections after finding that no practical and feasible improvements can be implemented to mitigate the lower levels of service. A proposed development that causes or exacerbates LOS E or F operations and causes a significant intersection impact should be considered for approval if it will provide a clear, overall benefit to the City (e.g., library expansion or relocation, new community center).

The Circulation Element also recognizes that for Caltrans and County controlled signals which are monitored as part of the Congestion Management Program (CMP), a minimum LOS E standard is acceptable.

With regards to bicycle parking standards, the City does not have an adopted ordinance, but does rely on the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) Bicycle Technical Guidelines as a recommended bicycle parking guideline. For general multi-family dwellings, VTA recommends one Class I space per three units and one Class II space per 15 units. A Class I space is defined as one that protects the entire bicycle and its components from theft, vandalism or inclement weather and is appropriate for long-term parking (two hours to all day). A Class II space is defined as a rack to which the frame and at least one wheel can be secured with a user provided U-lock or padlock and cable and is appropriate for short-term parking (less than two hours).

DISCUSSION

Traffic and Site Circulation

The site includes an existing 10,000 square-foot office building that generates 97 average daily trips (ADT), with 12 AM peak hour trips and 12 PM peak hour trips. The proposed Project, with 26 new dwelling units, will generate 141 ADT, with 9 AM peak hour trips and 11 PM peak hour trips. This will result in a net increase of 44 ADT, an overall decrease of 3 AM peak hour trips and an overall decrease of 1 PM peak hour trips. Since this is under the City's threshold of 50 net new daily trips, a full transportation impact analysis (TIA) is not required for the project. Although a project that generates less than 50 net new daily trips is generally considered to have less than significant impacts to traffic and intersection conditions, the CSC has previously expressed concern about the potential cumulative impacts of multiple development projects; therefore, staff requested the Applicant provide a cumulative traffic analysis (Traffic Study) of all the current proposed projects in the downtown area (Attachment A). In addition to analyzing traffic circulation, the Traffic Study provides an analysis of the project site circulation and access, and an evaluation of potential impacts to bicycle, pedestrian, and transit in the study area.

The Traffic Study includes an analysis of the nearby street network and six intersections in the immediate vicinity that will receive additional traffic from the Project and a cumulative analysis of four other proposed development projects on First Street (please Table 4 in the Traffic Study for a description of those projects). Four study scenarios were used to evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed Project and the cumulative impacts of the five proposed development projects as further detailed below:

Existing Conditions. Existing AM and PM peak-hour traffic volumes at the study intersections were based on traffic counts collected in June 2018 and March 2019. The study used whichever counts were higher for each intersection. Existing AM and PM peak-hour traffic volumes at the CMP intersections were obtained from recent counts conducted in April 2017 and the 2018 CMP Annual Monitoring Report, respectively.

Existing Plus Project Conditions. Existing plus project traffic volumes were estimated by adding to existing traffic volumes the trips associated with the proposed development. Existing plus project conditions were evaluated relative to existing conditions in order to determine potential project impacts.

Background Conditions. Background traffic volumes were estimated by adding to existing peak hour volumes the projected volumes from approved but not yet completed or occupied developments. The added traffic from approved but not yet completed developments was provided by the City of Los Altos.

Background Plus Project Conditions. Background plus project conditions reflect projected traffic volumes on the planned roadway network with completion of the project and approved developments. Background plus project traffic volumes were estimated by adding to background traffic volumes the additional traffic generated by the project.

Based on this analysis, the intersection level of service analysis results show that all study intersections would operate at acceptable levels of service during both AM and PM peak hours under existing plus project conditions and the background plus project conditions. The Traffic Study notes that, at some study intersections, the average delay under project conditions is shown to be better than under no-project conditions. This occurs because the project(s) would subtract from some traffic movements.

The Traffic Study also provides an evaluation of the onsite and offsite vehicle circulation. Vehicular access is from First Street with one entrance/exit driveway ramp located close to the western boundary of the site, which will also serve the proposed multiple-family project at 440 First Street, the site located on the adjoining west side of the subject site. The driveway ramp will enter the first level of underground parking for the project site and provide access to the underground parking for 440 First Street. A private ingress/egress easement will be recorded to ensure access from the subject site to the adjoining site. The shared driveway ramp will eliminate two other existing driveways for the subject site and the need for a separate driveway entrance at 440 First Street. This will increase pedestrian safety and will minimize vehicle conflicts with street circulation patterns. The Traffic Study also analyzed the driveway's sight-distance, ramp design, on-site (garage) vehicle circulation, and garbage truck access. The drive aisles and turning radiuses meet minimum dimensions to be accessible and usable for a range of residential vehicle sizes and types. As noted, the proposed driveway ramp is designed consistent with the City's "Parking Standards Exhibit A," which cannot exceed 20 percent slope, with a 10 percent slope at each transition. The Traffic Study did not identify any other design or functionality issues with on-site circulation.

Parking

For multiple family projects that include at least 10 percent affordable (below market rate) units, the Zoning Code requires one on-site parking space for each one-bedroom unit and two onsite parking spaces for each unit with two or three bedrooms. Since the Project is proposing three one-bedroom units, and 23 two or three-bedroom units, a minimum of 49 onsite parking spaces are required. The Project is providing a total of 50 parking spaces that are compliant with the minimum parking dimensions required in the Zoning Code¹. Of the 50 parking spaces, two are accessible (ADA) spaces and three pairs are tandem parking spaces which is acceptable. One additional parking space is provided, however, it doesn't comply with the minimum parking dimensions; therefore, it does not count towards the minimum parking required by the Municipal Code. Since the Project is providing affordable housing units, additional on-site guest parking is not required. However, on-street parking will be available on First Street and other streets within the project vicinity to provide for guest parking.

Transit Stop

The closest bus stops are located approximately 0.3 mile from the subject site at San Antonio Road and Lyell Street, which is considered an acceptable walking distance. Local VTA route 40 provides service between Foothill College in Los Altos Hills and La Avenida Street in Mountain View via San Antonio Road, Lyell Street and First Street.

Bicycle and Pedestrian

As recommended by the VTA guidelines, the Project should provide a minimum of nine Class I bicycle parking spaces and two Class II spaces. As specified on Garage Level 1 (Sheet A-0 of Attachment B), a 571 square foot bike room is proposed. In order to be considered Class I bicycle parking, the bike room will need to have controlled access. The plans identify 20 bicycle parking spaces, however, staff analyzed the bike room layout and dimensions in comparison with guidelines from a variety of sources. Staff recommends the layout be modified to maintain a 36-inch minimum spacing between the parallel bicycle racks and maintain a minimum 48-inch aisle between parked bicycles for acceptable access. The current bike room layout could be modified to include vertical, wall mounted racks to increase the aisle width. With this modification, staff estimates that the bike room could accommodate eight inverted-U racks for 16 bicycles and eight vertical wall mounted racks for eight bicycles, for a total of 24 bicycle parking spaces. As recommended in the Traffic Study, two Class II bicycle racks (four spaces), should be provided at the street level. Overall, the proposed Project's bicycle parking will exceed the VTA Guidelines for bicycle for Class I spaces with design modifications to the bike room, but will need to modify the plans to include the Class II parking spaces at street level.

No sidewalks currently exist along the First Street frontage. The Project will remove four existing trees in the surface parking lot adjoining First Street and some small planter boxes that are adjacent to the existing building. The Project will be adding a five-foot wide public sidewalk and providing a one-foot pedestrian access easement along the First Street frontage for a total of six feet. An entry courtyard for the main building entry at First Street is proposed that includes landscaping with trees and other plantings, and a sitting area. Raised private terraces are proposed for the three first-floor units that align First Street. The CD/R3 Zoning District requires that sixty percent of the front setback area is to be softscape. While landscaping is incorporated into the terrace design including trees and other plantings, it's unclear if this comprises the minimum sixty percent required by the district standards and the terraces are separated by a wall with a privacy fence on top for a total of

¹ Section 14.74.200(A) of the Zoning Code requires standard parking space are not less than nine feet wide by eighteen feet long

seven feet in height. Staff recommends that the interface between the street level pedestrian environment and the building be improved. The design should incorporate additional landscaping at the street level along the sidewalk for the majority of the frontage to enhance the pedestrian interest and buffer the wall. The wall at the back of the sidewalk should be reduced in height and broken up to reduce the uniform wall plane. Eliminating direct access from the first-floor units to the public street and reducing the depth of the private terrace to achieve additional landscaping should also be explored.

As mentioned above, the project will be eliminating two driveway entrances which will improve pedestrian safety along this portion of First Street. Other public streetscape improvements are anticipated to be incorporated into the final design of this project which will improve the pedestrian environment. Staff is working on a conceptual streetscape plan to include landscape bulb-outs or parking duck-outs consistent with proposed project at 425 First Street and at 367 First Street. It should be noted that staff has already made the Applicant aware of a forthcoming preferred streetscape plan and the site plan and landscape plan in Attachment B will be further refined with staff coordination.

Environmental Review

It is anticipated that this project will be categorically exempt from environmental review under Section 15332 of the California Environmental Quality Act because it is an in-fill development on a site in an urban setting that is under five-acres in size. A more detailed analysis will be conducted prior to the Planning Commission public hearing.

Attachments:

- A. Traffic Study, Hexagon Transportation Consultants
- B. Project Plans

RECOMMENDATIONS

444-450 First Street – D19-0001

1. Provide a minimum of two Class II bicycle parking racks at street level along First Street that doesn't encroach into and provides adequate spacing to the public sidewalk.
2. Provide controlled access to the bike room and revise the layout in the bike room to maintain a 36 inch minimum spacing between the parallel bicycle racks and maintain a minimum 48 inch aisle between parked bicycles for acceptable access.
3. Improve the interface between the street level pedestrian environment and the building. Additional landscaping at the street level shall be incorporated into the plan. The tall wall along First Street should be reduced in height and/or broken up to reduce the uniform wall plane and increase the visual pedestrian interest along First Street.