



DATE: October 27, 2021

AGENDA ITEM # 4

## AGENDA REPORT

**TO:** Complete Streets Commission

**FROM:** Steve Golden, Senior Planner

**SUBJECT:** 376 First Street – New Fifteen Unit Multiple-Family Residential Project

### RECOMMENDATION:

Discuss and provide multimodal transportation review feedback to staff regarding Design Review Application D19-0009 for a new multiple family residential project.

### ATTACHMENTS

- A. Traffic Analysis for 376 First Street, Fehr and Peers (September 8, 2020)
- B. Santa Clara Countywide VMT Evaluation Tool Report
- C. Design Plans

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### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This is a Design Review application for a new multiple-family residential building on a 0.20-acre (8,643 square foot) parcel at 376 First Street. The project site is designated as Downtown Commercial in the General Plan and zoned Commercial Downtown/Multiple Family (CD/R3). The existing site, which is located on the southwest side of First Street between Whitney and Lyell Streets, includes a 3,600 square foot one-story commercial building that is currently occupied by a restaurant. The remaining portion of the lot is covered with surface parking and minimal landscaping. The current site obtains access to First Street from two driveways abutting the side property lines. A asphalt walkway exists along the entire lot frontage.

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing building and construct a four-story building with fifteen residential condominium units, one level of underground parking with 23 parking spaces, 12 bicycle parking spaces, and a common rooftop area (Project). The existing driveway located at the northern project boundary will provide access to the underground garage. The Project will install an improved sidewalk along First Street that conforms to City standards.

### BACKGROUND

#### Complete Streets Commission Roles and Responsibilities

Pursuant to Section 14.78.090 of the Zoning Code, an application for City Council design review shall be subject to a multimodal transportation review and recommendation to the Planning Commission and City Council by the Complete Streets Commission as part of the approval process in order to assess potential project impacts to various modes of transportation such as but not limited to bicycle, pedestrian, parking, traffic impacts on public streets, and/or public transportation.

This item is intended to allow the Commission to discuss the item and to provide feedback to City staff regarding the multimodal transportation review of the proposed Project. Staff will return with this item at a future Commission meeting to formalize the recommendation to the Planning Commission and City Council subject to the completion of public notification requirements established in Section 14.78.090.

## **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

### **General Plan Circulation Element/Transportation Impact Analysis**

With regard to transportation impact analysis, the Circulation Element in the General Plan includes Implementing Programs C7 and C8 that outlines the criteria for reviewing traffic and circulation impacts for new development. Implementing Program C8 states:

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.

Implementing program C7 and C8 also states that the City should maintain a minimum Level of Service (LOS) "D" operating standard at all signalized intersections under Los Altos jurisdiction and that only after preparation of an environmental impact report with associated findings, accept LOS 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. This effectively established a significance threshold that was implemented under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

However, in 2013, Senate Bill 743 was signed by Governor Brown. SB 743 directed the State Office of Planning and Research (OPR) to develop new CEQA guidelines and to replace Level of Service (LOS) as the evaluation measure for transportation impacts under CEQA with another measure such as Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). In December 2018, the California Natural Resources Agency adopted new CEQA Guidelines including sections to implement SB 743 requiring among other things that: a project's effect on automobile delay (i.e., Level of Service) shall not constitute a significant environmental impact under CEQA; a lead agency must adopt the provisions no later than July 1, 2020; VMT is the most appropriate measure of transportation impacts; and a lead agency has the discretion to choose the most appropriate methodology to evaluate a project's VMT.

It should be noted that SB 743 does not preclude cities from retaining General Plan policies related to LOS. Furthermore, cities may continue to require transportation analyses of a project's consistency with the adopted LOS goals and/or other operational issues related to transportation.

With regards to VMT, the City had not adopted formal standards by July 1, 2020; however, in lieu of formal adoption, the Planning Division developed interim guidance for City review of projects to evaluate VMT impacts based on OPR Technical Advisory. The interim VMT guidance provided to the applicant at that time used the nine-county regional average for residential VMT per capita

threshold set at 13.95 and considered projects that are 15% below the regional average (or 11.86 residential VMT per capita) not to have a significant environmental impact.

The applicant's consultant, Fehr and Peers, utilized a screening analysis published in the OPR Technical Advisory for small projects based upon current CEQA guidelines for categorical exemptions for facilities less than or equivalent to 10,000 square feet. Although the small project screening may have been proposed as an acceptable method by OPR, the City adopted a different interim guideline. City staff utilized the Santa Clara County VMT Evaluation Tool<sup>1</sup> to evaluate and screen the proposed project to determine if the project would have a significant impact to VMT (Attachment B). Using 2020 as the baseline year, a 6.36 per capita residential VMT was estimated, which is below the 11.86 regional average; therefore, the proposed project doesn't have a significant impact on VMT using the City's VMT interim guideline.

With regards to trip generation and potential LOS deficiencies, Fehr and Peers estimated the project's trip generation rate based on trip generation rates from the Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE) publication (Attachment A). Based on those estimates, Fehr and Peers estimated the site has a 4,800 square foot restaurant that generates 402 daily trips, whereas the proposed 15 unit multiple-family residential project generates 82 daily trips. This is a net reduction of 320 daily trips. Staff notes that Fehr and Peers estimate of the existing building floor area included a large storage area at the back of the building and a more accurate estimate of the existing restaurant based on the footprint of the building not including the storage area is 3,600 square feet. Using the ITE trip generation rates in the report based on this reduced floor area of the existing building would result in an estimated 302 daily trips for the existing building and a net reduction 220 trips with the proposed 15 unit residential project. In either case, no further transportation analysis is required to determine LOS impact because both are under the 50 net new daily trip generation required under General Plan implementation programs. In addition, fewer trips are anticipated during both the AM and PM peak hour period which are the most critical periods to evaluate. Based on the trip generation estimates provided, the proposed housing project may improve service levels of intersections in the vicinity.

### **Parking**

The Project is proposing income restricted units; therefore would be eligible for parking reduction exceptions under the State of California Density Bonus law. Below is a table showing the required parking per zoning code standards (Section 14.78.080) and the parking reduction provisions in Chapter 14.28 Multiple-Family Affordable Housing<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Hosted by Valley Transportation Authority at <https://vmttool.vta.org/>

<sup>2</sup> City's implementation of the State of California Density Bonus Laws

**Required Residential Parking**

<b>Bedroom Count</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Required Parking Ratio per Zoning Code (1</b>	<b>Required Parking Spaces Per Zoning Code</b>	<b>Density Bonus Parking Ratios</b>	<b>Required Parking Spaces Per Density Bonus</b>
Two Bedrooms	8	2/unit	16	2/unit	16
One Bedroom	7	1.5/unit	11	1/unit	7
Guest Parking		1 per 4 units	4	-	-
<b>Total Parking:</b>			<b>31</b>		<b>23</b>

The parking spaces normally required in the Zoning Code without applying Density Bonus parking reductions shown in the table above are for reference purposes only and should not be used as a basis to recommend denial of the project. The Applicant proposes a total of 23 parking spaces in one level of underground parking accessed from a driveway directly from First Street. Three of the spaces including an accessible parking space are standard at-grade parking stalls and 20 parking spaces are proposed to be on a mechanical parking puzzle lift. The mechanical lift system is comprised of a three-level system with one level designed in a sub-grade area. The system always has an empty space that is utilized to shift automobiles around to be able to access an available space at grade level. The Zoning Code requires that parking spaces be a minimum of nine feet in width and 18 feet in length, clear of any encroachments from pillars or structural elements. Since the mechanical lift system encroaches into this space, the applicant will be requesting a waiver of development standard pursuant to Chapter 14.28 Multiple-Family Affordable Housing, consistent with California Density Bonus Law to enable the installation of the parking lift system. This is a similar requested waiver of the development standard that other recent projects have pursued including the mixed-use project at 389 First Street and the multiple family project at 425 First Street.

The applicant is also proposing three total electric vehicle (EV) parking spaces. Two of them will be located on the lift system and the other one will be available to the accessible parking space.

Fehr and Peers also evaluated the on-site circulation, maneuverability, and site access entering and exiting the underground garage (Attachment A). The analysis showed that only one vehicle can safely enter or exit the garage at a time, since a vehicle leaving the garage will encroach on the path of the vehicle entering the garage. This is proposed to be mitigated by the installation of convex mirrors at the top and bottom of garage ramp. A mirror is shown at the top of the ramp, but not at the bottom of the ramp; therefore, staff recommends a condition of approval requiring a convex mirror at the bottom of the ramp. The consultant also evaluated sight stopping distance of drivers traveling north or south on First Street per engineering standards. The evaluation noted sufficient stopping distances and site visibility.

**Public Transit**

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 Mountain View Transit Center in Downtown Mountain View via a North Bayshore routing.

## **Bicycle and Pedestrian**

As recommended by the VTA guidelines, multiple family residential projects should provide one Class I bicycle parking space per each three units and one Class II bicycle parking space for each fifteen units (but no less than two). The Project is providing ten Class I and two Class II bicycle parking spaces, whereas five Class I and two Class II bicycle parking spaces are required. The Class I bicycle parking spaces are in the underground garage level in an enclosed room that is assumed to have lockable hardware (see Sheet A.3 of Attachment C). The Class II spaces are at street level at the southern portion of the project (see Sheet L1.1). With regards to the nearest dedicated bicycle facility, a Class II bicycle lane exists on South San Antonio Road.

An asphalt concrete walkway currently exists along the First Street frontage that does not conform to current City standards. The Project will be required to install a new sidewalk along the lot frontage and proposes an easement along the lot frontage to provide for a six-foot wide sidewalk (see Civil Drawings in Attachment C).<sup>3</sup> The abutting sidewalk to the south will remain unimproved until that property redevelops, or the City improves the sidewalk through a capital improvement project.

The schools serving the site are Gardner Bullis Elementary, Egan Junior High School, and Los Altos High School. The City of Los Altos recently completed suggested “Walk n’ Roll” maps for each school and suggested proposed improvements for some of the schools including the ones utilized by this Project<sup>4</sup>. No improvements are suggested on the suggested routes except for crosswalk improvements to the frontage of the schools and the crosswalks across Foothill Expressway to Gardner Bullis Elementary which is a County facility.

## **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 that is substantially surrounded by urban uses and does not contain significant natural habitat for endangered species. The development proposal is consistent with the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, does not result in any significant effects related to traffic, noise, air or water quality, and is adequately served by all required utilities and public services, and none of the exceptions to applicability of the exemption are present. A more detailed analysis will be provided to the Planning Commission and City Council for review.

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<sup>3</sup> The Engineering Division will be conditioning the project to include a one-foot pedestrian access easement.

<sup>4</sup> See maps found here: <https://losaltoscompletestreets.com/suggested-routes-to-school/>