

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE  
CITY OF LOS ALTOS, HELD ON THURSDAY, JULY 18, 2019 BEGINNING AT  
7:00 P.M. AT LOS ALTOS CITY HALL, ONE NORTH SAN ANTONIO ROAD,  
LOS ALTOS, CALIFORNIA**

**ESTABLISH QUORUM**

PRESENT: Chair Samek, Commissioners Ahi, Bodner, Bressack and Meadows  
ABSENT: Vice-Chair Lee  
IN PREPARATION: Commissioner Marek  
STAFF: Community Development Director Biggs, Senior Planner Golden and City  
Attorney Lee

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

Gary Wesley commented on the SB 592 bill in California.

**ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION/ACTION**

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

**1. Planning Commission Minutes**

Approve minutes of the regular meeting of June 6, 2019, 2019.

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Meadows, seconded by Commissioner Bodner, the Commission approved the minutes from the June 6, 2019 Regular Meeting as written.

The motion was approved (4-0-1) by the following vote:

AYES: Samek, Ahi, Bodner, and Meadows

NOES: None

ABSENT: Lee and Marek

ABSTAIN: Bressack

**STUDY SESSION**

**2. PPR19-0001 – Abbie Bourgan – 440 First Street**

Design Review Study Session for a proposed three-story multiple-family building consisting of seven residential units and one level of underground parking. *Project Planner: Golden*

Senior Planner Golden presented the staff report.

Project applicant Abbie Bourgan gave the first overview of the project stating that the original design was a three-story, four-unit project, but are now coordinating with the neighboring property for a shared driveway and garage access. This will eliminate the curb cut to provide two to three parking spaces.

Project architect Steve Collom with RH & Associates presented the architectural concepts of the project noting the narrow width of the lot and coordination with the neighboring property. He

stated that entrance area of the building addresses the window and balcony placement of the 396 First Street building. He was asked if spaces 11 and 12 in the basement could be further addressed for accessibility and asked if the column could be changed.

#### Public Comment

Gary Wesley said the property is not zoned to permit this type of development, is impacted by the Foothill expressway and should not be given a CEQA exemption.

Resident Ramin Shahidi who lives across Foothill Expressway expressed concerns about view and light pollution impacts to the adjacent residential neighborhood due to the rooftop deck, balconies, and large windows.

Resident Eric Steinle stated his opposition to the roof top deck, that homeowner's associations are required to maintain the building and will impact fees, and said the homeowner association should have a side access for maintenance of the building; however, there may not be enough space.

Resident Abigail Ahrens said housing is needed, the ramp for dual access is expensive but saves on street parking, the frontage improvements provide amenities for the benefit of the pedestrian, asked the Commission to review the rear elevation, and concluded by saying an admirable effort is being brought forth and provides opportunities for those that are downsizing.

Resident and President of the HOA at 396 First Street, Paul Frattini, agreed with comments made that three stories are better than four; prefers no rooftop deck; said 396 First is two buildings and noted the HOA has not been able to maintain the building well, so he recommended requiring a two-foot setback. He noted an existing drainage problem that caused damage to one of the units at the rear of 396 First Street that the original developer never addressed.

Resident Fred Fallah expressed concern with the existing light pollution on homes; said CEQA is still an issue; the design is not appropriate for Foothill Expressway since it is not a good transportation corridor; it is not in keeping with Los Altos; but noted he has no issue with the parking design of the building.

#### Commission Discussion

The Commission discussed the project and provided the following comments:

- Commissioner Bressack:
  - Appreciates the scale of the project;
  - Commented on well designed floor plan;
  - Recommended gentler color changes between colors;
  - Recommended to recess the windows;
  - Recommended to resolve the roof element and break up vertical wall plane;
  - Likes that the elevator tower was pulled back;
  
- Commissioner Bodner:
  - Appreciates the design but needs a better color combination;
  - Likes the shared driveway, said it's a good model for narrow sites, and a win-win benefit;
  - Likes the screen design;
  - Likes that the building has been pulled back at the rear fourth story;
  - A reality of downtown is higher/taller buildings;

- Does not support the first floor extending into the 10-foot setback given the arrangement of the building, but perhaps upper stories;
- Wants to better understand the parking space arrangement because it may be dangerous; and
- Would appreciate confirmation that the applicants are working with the neighbors.
  
- Commissioner Meadows:
  - Questioned what the building would look like in relation to the adjoining building – a fuller streetscape would be useful;
  - In compliance with the code, a one-bedroom was appropriately small, but the three-bedrooms felt massive;
  - If the market is going this way, can there be a reconfiguration – more efficient way to arrange spaces/units;
  - Likes the laser-cut screens, but pattern shadows may be busy;
  - Providing additional off-street parking with shared ramp is a benefit;
  - Questioned if the fourth-floor large private decks are needed and if practical; and
  - Asked about the relationship of the deck to the adjoining building.
  
- Commissioner Ahi:
  - Noted the elevator tower and common deck are a good thing;
  - 396 First Street needs to be shown in the next submittal, including location of the windows;
  - Parking spaces 11 and 12 are a concern and questioned whether a five-point turn next to the driveway is practical or should the column be moved;
  - Recommended to provide some window accents to break up wall plane;
  - Look to introduce awning and railings on First Street;
  - Questioned the decorative railings, may be too overpowering;
  - Commonality with adjoining developments is good;
  - Slightly shorter windows and smaller balconies would be better, asked if they make sense along Foothill; and
  - Moving the common deck to the front would be better and give a better relationship to 396 First Street project.
  
- Chair Samek:
  - Eliminate the gap between buildings;
  - Asked for clarification on the units at the third floor and the elevator tower and why it needed to go above the 46-foot height limit;
  - Not certain if column removal would equate to functional parking at spaces at 11 and 12, especially at the driveway entrance, concerned about overall circulation;
  - On the elevations the windows need some depth or articulation and finer detailing;
  - Okay with the private decks on the third floor;
  - The laser-cut railings are a good balance with transparency; and

## **PUBLIC HEARING**

### **3. 19-CA-03 – City of Los Altos – Downtown CRS Zone Uses**

Proposed amendments to Chapter 14.48, CRS Commercial Retail Sales District, modifying the list of permitted and conditional uses and making findings of CEQA exemption. *Project Manager: Biggs*

Community Development Director Biggs presented the staff report, recommending adoption of the proposed ordinance to the City Council.

### Public Comment

Representative from the Los Altos Village Association (LAVA) Scott Hunter spoke in support.

Resident and Chamber of Commerce President Kim Mosley spoke in favor of the proposed changes.

Representative from Los Altos Property Owners Downtown (LAPOD) Kim Cranston spoke in favor.

Resident and commercial real estate broker David Rock stated that more feet on the street are needed, there are not a lot of retail inquiries these days, and potential tenants are seeking restaurant and personal service uses.

### Commission Discussion

Commissioner Meadows stated that the changes do not rule out retail and will help bring folks to town.

Commissioner Bodner noted the Downtown Vision's economic vitality called for allowing service uses; the retail commercial market is evolving and needs to stay in step with the times; changes to uses can bring lots of other folks to town; appreciates LAVA, LAPOD, and the Chamber of Commerce weighing in..

Commissioner Bressack questioned if there is a sure way to achieve balance in the future so no one use becomes predominant.

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Bressack, seconded by Commissioner Bodner, the Commission recommended approval and adoption of the proposed ordinance to the City Council.

The motion was approved (5-0) by the following vote:

AYES: Samek, Ahi, Bodner, Bressack and Meadows

NOES: None

ABSENT: Lee and Marek

## **DISCUSSION**

### **4. Downtown Vision Presentation and FAR Review**

This item was continued from the June 6, 2019 Planning Commission meeting. *Project Manager: Biggs*

Community Development Director Biggs presented the staff report, recommending that the Planning Commission evaluate and develop draft recommendations and tools that can be implemented to achieve a desired look and feel for future development in Los Altos.

### Public Comment

None.

### Commission Discussion

Chair Samek questioned if FAR is needed and what is the problem that is need of a fix?

Commissioner Bodner stated that if the City goes with 2.5 FAR in certain areas it only works if height limits go higher.

Commissioner Ahi stated that Main and State Streets may be a good location for FAR limits and asked if FAR is successful in mixed-use buildings.

Commissioner Bressack stated that two issues have the greatest effect of moving the Downtown Vision forward are height and parking with FAR. FAR is not the best to do first for downtown, but tackle height recommendations and parking.

Commissioners felt a list of approved projects with their respective FARs in and near the Downtown plus examples of where FAR's have been used successfully from other cities; would be useful in their evaluation and development of recommendations to the City Council.

### **COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS AND COMMENTS**

Commissioner Bressack asked what the policy is regarding Commissioner vacancies and was told to inform the Commission Chair and staff.

### **POTENTIAL FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

The Commission requested that a discussion on the Downtown Vision and FAR Review be scheduled for the next Joint Meeting with the City Council.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Samek adjourned the meeting at 10:00 P.M.

---

Jon Biggs  
Community Development Director