

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE
CITY OF LOS ALTOS, HELD ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 1, 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, Vice-Chair Lee Commissioners Ahi, Bodner, Bressack, Marek and Meadows

STAFF: Community Development Director Biggs, Senior Planner Golden, Associate Planner Gallegos, and City Attorney Lee

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None.

STUDY SESSION

1. 19PPR-0002 – Ismail Unlu – 376 First Street

Design Review Study Session for a proposed four-story multiple-family building consisting of 15 residential units and one level of underground parking with a mechanical parking lift system.

Project Planner: Golden

Senior Planner Golden presented the staff report.

Project architect Brett Bailey gave an overview of the project and noted the Klaus Puzzle Lift system is the only system that provides 9' x 18' parking platform, explained the trash enclosure location, and the three type of unit designs. He also answered questions posed by the Commission to clarify some of the design details.

Public Comment

Resident Jon Baer said this modern architecture would fit in better on El Camino Real than downtown; the hodge podge of architecture along First Street is not good; expressed concern that the project lacked landscaping and asked if the parking is based on allowances per the density bonus regulations or are if they are asking for a waiver that will exacerbate the parking problem downtown.

Resident and President of the HOA at 396 First Street, Paul Frattini, stated the City is losing a great restaurant at this location; noted his concerns about the roof deck, height of the building, light pollution and noise; claimed the First Street side of the project lacks landscaping; and is concerned with the South elevation of the proposed building.

Resident of 396 First Street, Phil Underwood, stated that parking in the area is a serious issue; discussed the trash and recycling collection location; noted a concern with the height and the common deck use; concerned about short-term rental potential; and said there is a lack of landscaping at First Street.

Resident Eric Steinle stated his concern over the roof top decks, and without the the elevator tower to the roof top deck there would be a decrease in the overall height of the building.

Commission Discussion

The Commission discussed the project and provided the following comments:

- Commissioner Ahi:
 - Concerned with the overall height, not consistent with other projects;
 - The front entrance is not appropriately oriented to the street;
 - The dark gray stair tower feels heavy –review the project materials as they need to be more dynamic;
 - Windows need more ornamentation – trim, awnings, etc and walls need to have some articulation to break up wall plane;
 - Gable elements should project more;
 - The balcony facing the south on top floor has no awning and could have a feature above it; and
 - Study the Foothill elevation and use shorter windows to address privacy concerns.
- Vice-Chair Lee:
 - Good material palette and use of real wood;
 - Loss of opportunity not having entry on First Street;
 - Garage entrance needs to have a gate or some closure;
 - Contemporary gables don't feel integrated into the design;
 - Color palette could be modified – remove dark grays and add lighter colors;
 - Expressed a concern of the height with the elevator towers – explore elevator technologies; and
 - Needs window articulation and quality fenestration.
- Commissioner Bodner:
 - Appreciates the previous projects the architect has designed within the City;
 - Orientation is awkward with the elevator tower on the side;
 - Should have a gate on the garage, which should be decorative;
 - Soften laser cut entry trellis;
 - Maybe okay on height to get variation from other projects;
 - Supportive of the proposed one-bedroom units;
 - Supports the projection of the balconies of the upper stories; and
 - Should be more generous with landscaping on First Street.
- Commissioner Meadows:
 - Needs more landscaping on First Street and Foothill Expy;
 - Front of building should be oriented to First Street;
 - Needs a formal entry lobby;
 - Adjacent development will impact the proposed entry;
 - Likes the proposed materials;
 - Windows are very large and might impact resident's privacy;
 - Should show how this project will appear in the context of other projects in process; and
 - Concerned about large expanse of stucco.
- Commissioner Bressack:
 - Orientation of the building and garage is a missed opportunity;
 - Need to improve the front façade with a human scaled entrance;
 - Feels big and vertical in design – the gable roofs add verticality, but not well integrated;
 - The material palette is good, but needs better landscape;
 - Needs to address relationship of abutting properties;
 - Plaster joints can be a good addition but needs more articulation; and

- Roof deck should not impact neighboring properties.
- Commissioner Marek:
 - Agreed with comments made;
 - Concerned about the front entry; and
 - Lack of landscaping.
- Chair Samek:
 - Need to address the front façade;
 - Bike parking design feels too urban;
 - Should consider adding a gate to the garage;
 - Concerned with pedestrian safety at the garage ramp;
 - Elevator tower feels massive and exacerbated because there are no gables to cover the tower on the front elevation;
 - Height is a concern and asked about how it's measured in this zone district;
 - Concerned about roof decks at the property line and noted they should be put on First like other proposed projects; and
 - Foothill and First Street elevations should be the primary elevations.

PUBLIC HEARING

2. D19-0002, CUP19-0001, TM19-0002 – Mircea Voskerician - 4898 El Camino Real

Design Review, Use Permit, and Subdivision applications for a new five-story, multiple-family, condominium building with 21 units, two levels of underground parking and a rooftop common area deck. The project includes four affordable units and is requesting a density bonus and development incentives to allow for increased building height and a reduced front yard setback. *Project Planner: Gallegos*

Associate Planner Gallegos presented the staff report, recommending approval to the City Council of design review, use permit and subdivision applications D19-0002, CUP19-0001 and TM19-0002 per the staff report findings and conditions contained in the resolution.

Project architect Jeff Potts of SDG Architects presented the project stating that the project meets the density bonus ordinance requirements; an extra 10 parking spaces have been included in the project for a total of 55 spaces on site, which is more than required by code; and noted the project provides two bike lockers per unit.

Public Comment

Resident Anatol Shmelev stated there was not a substantial amount of greenery; a height of 72 feet is a tall building and much taller than other structures in the City has; traffic and safety a concern for children; and parking is an issue because three to four-bedroom units will have 3-4 cars each and this needs to be addressed.

Resident Eric Steinle stated that the roof top deck was a concern; given there is a series of three and four-bedroom homes there is some disappointment that there are no smaller units; and this is the CT zone where mixed-use development can take place on the El Camino Real and not including commercial space within the proposed building was unfortunate.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Meadows thanked the applicant for paying attention to the Study Session comments; noted the project is compliant with Density Bonus Law; added this project is very exciting in many regards including exceeding the number of BMRs, parking spaces, bike parking and open space areas; nice to have BMRs of a larger size; the corner is much improved and appreciates the step backs; there

is a lack of wood used on the rear elevator, which is inconsistent with the rest of the plans – wood should be on all elevators; noted the rendering at page A16 is unattractive and adding wood would help; and strongly encourages the landscape architect eliminate the Mexican Feather Grass from the landscape plan.

Commissioner Bressack noted her ex parte communication with the applicant; said the rear elevation is the least resolved part of the project and wishes the stair and building were lower; but, the development of the project's plans reflect the best part of the review process.

Commissioner Marek gave his support for the project

Vice-Chair Lee said there is a lot going on architecturally; large volume and massing with no way to break down the building other than its detailing; very horizontal accentuations are heavy and there appears to be a super frame around the building; reads as one large super block; design is heavy, massive, and industrial in which other elements get lost because of this horizontal feature; the corner is successful, but the architect needs to liberate the tower; and asked how the window details interface with the wall at all the elevations.

Commissioner Bodner noted her ex parte discussion with the project architect; this design appears too commercial/industrial looking; use more wood; rails need to be broken up; not in support of the super banding; concern with metal railing; the tower needs work and a better material mix; more trees are needed towards the back of the site off of Jordan Avenue; and believes units are large and would like to see smaller/more units within the same building envelope .

Commissioner Ahi stated the roof top deck is beneficial; can justify additional height because the corner is successful with the additional height; encouraged the applicant to keep the stair towners at 68 feet; likes the changes made since the last meeting; but noted the building feels heavy overall; window sizes on the tower can be changed to break up their repetitive appearance; and the design is more dynamic with multiple balconies, make it look like multiple elements.

Chair Samek noted his ex parte communication with the applicant; expressed his concern with the tower transition from gray material to wood; noted the back of the building needs attention; lighten up the railings and look at the elevator tower heights of the First Street project where the roof deck and upper floor are at the same level; indifferent on unit size; design sizes provide same variability in the market; would support as designed with the proposed number of units or an increase in the number of units, but reduction in the size of the units; could support this modification so long as parking requirement is met; and noted the color between the stone/hard surface material and stucco needs more differentiation.

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Bressack, seconded by Commissioner Bodner, the Commission continued the item to the August 15, 2019 Planning Commission meeting to allow the applicant an opportunity to address Commissioner comments.

The motion was approved (7-0) by the following vote:

AYES: Samek, Lee, Ahi, Bodner, Bressack, Marek and Meadows

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

DISCUSSION

3. OA District Conditional Use Determination

Request for the Planning Commission to issue a determination on if an animal clinic use is of the same general character as other conditional uses in the OA District and allow for a conditional use permit to be submitted. *Project Planner: Dabl*

Community Development Director Biggs presented the staff report, recommending concurrence of that an animal clinic is of the same general character of other uses in the OA Zone District.

Public Comment

Project applicant and resident Abigail Ahrens spoke in favor of the determination.

Glynn Echerd of Los Altos Vet Clinic stated that the clinic closes at 6:00 PM and no animals stay overnight.

Melissa Neal of Los Altos Vet Clinic and resident of Los Altos spoke in support of the request.

Commercial real estate broker Tom Smith spoke in support of the determination.

Action: Upon motion by Commissioner Meadows, seconded by Commissioner Bressack, the Commission found that an Animal Clinic is of the same general character of other uses in the OA Zone District.

The motion was approved (7-0) by the following vote:

AYES: Samek, Lee, Ahi, Bodner, Bressack, Marek and Meadows

NOES: None

ABSENT: None

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Commissioner Bressack reported on the July 30, 2019 City Council meeting.

POTENTIAL FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Community Development Director Biggs reported on future agenda items.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Samek adjourned the meeting at 10:35 P.M.

Jon Biggs
Community Development Director