

**CITY OF BELMONT
MEMORANDUM**



TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Carlos de Melo, Community Development Director

SUBJECT: July 5, 2006 Planning Commission Meeting – Agenda Item 7A
Preliminary Design Review – 1320 Talbyrn Drive – Proposed Six-Lot Single Family Residential Subdivision (Appl. 2006-0043)

The City has received a Preliminary Design Review application for a 1.36-acre site located at 1320 Talbyrn Drive (See Attached 300/500 Foot Radius Map). The site is currently contains a single family dwelling, and various accessory structures. The applicant proposes to subdivide the lot into six lots to accommodate for single-family residential development.

The project would eventually require Tentative Subdivision Map and Single Family Design Review approval for the new dwellings. The subdivision entitlement requires both Planning Commission and City Council approval. Single Family Design Review entitlements are typically reviewed at the Commission level only.

Preliminary Design Review provides an opportunity for early identification of issues and alternatives that should be considered by the applicant before submitting a formal development review plan for the project. Preliminary design review is not intended to require the Commission to provide specific direction regarding an application since the Commission may not be reviewing final plans and has not received public comment.

Preliminary Design Review involves minimal staff review: staff does not check plans for completeness, analyze compliance with zoning (and in this case subdivision ordinance) standards, or examine environmental impacts. Comments and suggestions made during Preliminary Design Review are completely non-binding on the Planning Commission. Staff will work with the applicant to incorporate and address all Planning Commission comments in future submittals.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant is proposing to merge four lots (identified as Assessors Parcel Numbers 043-081-090, 100, 110, & 120) into two lots. The resulting lot sizes would be 13,311 sq. ft., and 14,988 sq. ft., respectively. A single-family dwelling is proposed for each resulting lot. Project plans indicate a 49% slope and 3,554 sq. ft. dwelling for the western lot, and 44% slope and 4,076 sq. ft. dwelling for the eastern lot. Project plans further indicate template dwelling, garage, and driveway locations for the two potential building sites. The interior configuration of the individual units is not known.

An existing 10-foot wide section of property (and associated utility easement) running north from the Ralston Avenue frontage to the rear (south) property boundary would bifurcate the proposed two merged lots; one of the resulting merged lots extends to the southwestern city boundary limit. Access to the site would be provided via an existing driveway, and potential easement agreements with the adjacent Mid-Peninsula property located to the east. The subject site is located adjacent to Ralston Avenue but is constrained from having direct access to this street due to severe topography issues located downslope of the site; an existing adjacent retaining wall provides soil stability along this southern section of Ralston Avenue providing a further impracticality for direct access.

Surrounding uses include the Mid-Peninsula Water District property, Fox Elementary School, and mixed residential uses to the east and south. Single family residential uses and San Juan Canyon areas are located to the north, and the City of San Mateo boundary is located directly to the west of the site.

The proposed single-family residences are a permitted use in the designated R-1A (Single Family Residential) zoning district, and are conforming to the General Plan Designation (RL - Low Density Residential) for the site.

The proposed project will require (at a minimum) Tentative Subdivision Map, and Single Family Design Review approval. In order to approve the aforementioned entitlements, the Planning Commission and City Council will be required to make findings of conformity with zoning regulations, General Plan policies for the site as well as area compatibility.

DISCUSSION

In evaluating the project at this preliminary stage of the development review process, the City Council has directed that the focus be on three questions:

1. Is the proposed land use appropriate for the site?
2. Is the proposed intensity of land uses appropriate for the site?
3. Is the arrangement or distribution of proposed land uses appropriate for the site?

As discussed earlier, the R-1A Zoning District allows for single family residential uses by right; development standards (maximum allowed floor area, setbacks, height, parking, etc.), provide additional guidance to determine land use appropriateness in concert with the site conditions.

Staff believes that **conversion of the currently vacant site to a residential use** would not significantly alter the character of the neighborhood – as the surrounding uses are mixed, with single-family residential uses located south, east, and north of the site. The proposed single-family residential land use would be similar to other uses in the vicinity and appears to be appropriate for the site. There are a number of perspectives that can be taken regarding intensification of the single-family uses for the site: contextual neighborhood setting, fiscal impact, and traffic are the three most prominent.

Locating a residential use within the site will not substantially alter the area's function. The City's General Plan recognizes the area as predominantly single family residential; continuing this development trend would be typical for the neighborhood. Fiscally, the project will generate property taxes to the City; however, it cannot be determined at this time if those taxes will match the demand in services from future residents of the project. As for traffic, the development of a residential project is generally not expected to significantly alter traffic patterns for the area; the small size of the site may cause any change to its traffic patterns to be completely absorbed by the traffic patterns of the vicinity.

The second question focuses on the intensity/density of the proposed residential use in determining appropriateness for the site. The applicant's proposal of five residential units spread among the 1.36-acre property (subtracting out the 7,078 sq. ft. common drive/landscape buffer lot) represents a density of approximately 4.27 units per acre – which is within the 1-7 dwelling unit range of the RL (Low-Density) General Plan designation for the site.

Finally, while the proposed site plan indicates a potential location for the two new dwellings, it does not give sufficient clues on the appropriateness of site/building arrangement. These issues will be more accurately assessed upon submittal of a project grading plan, geotechnical/soils studies, slope/site topography context, protected tree removal/replacement information, landscape plans, bulk/massing details, and architectural design submittals. Thus, while the location of the residential buildings relating to arrangement/distribution may be appropriate for their respective sites, this question is unable to be fully answered without the necessary project submittal information described above.

RECOMMENDATION

The expressed purpose of Preliminary Design Review is to, “inform the decision makers about the project and its general features...” Planning Commissioners are under no obligation to provide comment; however, your views may be helpful to the applicant in preparing a formal application. Staff recommends that any comments offered by the Commission be directed only at the three issues raised in this memo: proposed single-family residential use, intensity/density, and site layout.

ATTACHMENTS

- I. 300/500 Foot Radius Map
- II. Preliminary Design Plans (Commission only)