

CITY OF BELMONT  
MEMORANDUM



**TO:** Planning Commission

**FROM:** Damon DiDonato, Senior Planner

**VIA:** Carlos de Melo, Community Development Director

**SUBJECT:** December 18, 2012 Planning Commission Meeting – Agenda Item 7A  
Address: Vacant lot adjacent to 1328 Old County Road;  
Project: Study Session - Preliminary Review for the construction of two apartment units;  
Application. No.: 2012-0046

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### Summary

The City has received a Preliminary Review application for a vacant property adjacent to 1328 Old County Road. The site is currently undeveloped. The proposal is to construct two apartment units on site.

Preliminary 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 Review is not intended to require the Planning Commission to provide specific direction regarding an application since the Commission has not received public comment.

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

### Site Conditions

The roughly triangular, approximately 2,700 square foot project site is located along the east side of Old County Road. A quit claimed railroad spur easement is delineated across a portion of the site. The property is relatively flat, and minimally vegetated. It is currently used as uncovered off-street parking. There is currently a full sidewalk, curb, gutter, and an existing driveway cut located along the site frontage. The project site is zoned C-4 (Service Commercial). Surrounding uses are:

North – Commercial – Roofing Company with outdoor storage  
South – Residential Apartment Building  
East – Cal Train Rail road tracks and parking area  
West – Commercial – Deli and commercial storage facility

The surrounding area is generally developed with small, one-to two story commercial buildings. Most of

the surrounding buildings have a contemporary design, and utilize flat, tar and gravel roofs, metal window frames, and stucco exterior walls.

### **Project Description**

The applicant is proposing the construction of an approximately 1,430 square foot, two-story apartment building. The building would include two covered parking spaces on the ground floor, and two, one-bedroom apartment units on the second floor. Floor plans have not been submitted, but the applicant reports that each unit would contain approximately 700 square feet of living space. The building would have brick veneer and stucco exterior walls, and a flat tar and gravel roof (see attached perspective drawing). No landscaping plan has been submitted with the Preliminary Application.

### **Analysis**

As noted above, Preliminary Review involves minimal staff review and staff does not check plans for completeness, analyze specific compliance with zoning standards, or examine environmental impacts. However, in order to assist the Commission in its evaluation of the proposed project and to facilitate more meaningful direction to the applicant, staff provides the following:

#### General Plan / Downtown Specific Plan

The Belmont General Plan currently designates the project site (CS) Commercial Service. The project site is also located within the Downtown Specific Plan Area (DTSP). The General Plan and the DTSP are currently undergoing revisions that could substantially affect the proposed project (Planning Commission Public Hearings on a draft document may begin to occur as early as March 2013); the resulting policy amendments would create the Belmont Village Zoning Districts (BVZ). However, multiple public hearings, public outreach and environmental review would need to occur, and thus the draft document may be altered prior to final adoption by the City Council. Therefore, staff has not evaluated the proposed Preliminary Application for compliance with the draft DTSP.

#### Zoning Ordinance/Downtown Specific Plan

The subject property is located within the C-4 (Commercial Service) zone, and within the Service Commercial area of the DTSP. Section 5.5.9 of the Zoning Ordinance (*Downtown Plan Area Zoning Regulations*) specifies the following development standards for projects within the Service Commercial DTSP area:

*Section 5.3.14 (Design Review) - All exterior modifications and new construction shall be subject to the Design Review process defined in Section 13 of the Belmont Zoning Ordinance (BZO). The specific architectural, landscaping, open space and height and bulk standards shall be as identified in Sections 5.3.15, 5.3.16, and 5.3.17 of the BZO.*

As referenced above, Sections 5.3.15, 5.3.16, and 5.3.17 of the BZO are provided on page three of this report.

*5.3.15 (Landscaping) - Projects involving the construction of new floor area shall provide a minimum of 10 percent of the site in landscaping. Projects involving the construction of one or more new buildings shall provide 15 percent of the site in landscaping. A minimum of one tree shall be provided for each 400 square feet of landscape area.*

The proposed project does not include a landscape plan. The project would require approximately 405 sq. ft. of landscaping and one tree. It appears that there would be sufficient space outside the footprint of the building to install the required landscaping. However, additional landscaping requirements are included for the project frontage.

*5.3.16 Building Height and Bulk - The maximum permitted building height shall conform to Figure 4.2 Building Height and Bulk Map, Downtown Specific Plan. Figure 4.2 shall be used in conjunction with the Building Line and Frontage, Figure 4.3, Downtown Specific Plan and Table 4.2 Building Line, Frontage and Setback Guidelines, Downtown Specific Plan to identify site specific development and landscaping standards. The Streetscape, Open Space and Landscape Map, Figure 4.1, Downtown Specific Plan, shall be used to identify additional landscaping requirements, right-of-way treatment, street lighting and furniture and decorative paving requirements.*

Based upon review of the DTSP sections identified above, the proposed building could be stepped back to three stories in height, but would need to maintain a 10-12 foot building (street-wall) setback from the edge of sidewalk, and maintain a 10-12 foot wide sidewalk. A row of street trees would be required, and the street-wall setback area would need to be landscaped (planter pots and planter boxes would be permitted). Decorative lighting and street furniture would not be required.

In order to meet the current standards identified in the DTSP, small lots would need to be merged to facilitate large scale redevelopment of the downtown area (i.e., larger lots could accommodate required setbacks, and larger scale redevelopment would have the economies of scale necessary to cover the costs of significant frontage improvements).

Given the size and shape of the lot, the proposed project could not conform to the streetscape and open space requirements identified in the current DTSP. However, if the applicant merged the property with the adjacent lot (in common ownership), more compliant redevelopment of the merged property could occur.

*5.3.17 (Architectural Theme Zones) - Architectural style, building components and sign requirements for exterior modifications and new construction shall conform to Figure 4.4, Downtown Specific Plan. The Design Guidelines identified in Section 4.7.3 and 4.7.4 Site Planning and Design Objectives of the Downtown Specific Plan, shall be incorporated into project design.*

The subject property is located within the Mixed Architectural Theme Zone of the DTSP. This zone allows for a wide variety of architectural styles, but mainly consists of elements complimentary to the Mediterranean and/or Wood Residential Theme Zone (i.e., variety of roof types and slopes, stucco, stone and/or wood siding, projecting and recessing building elements, etc.). The proposed contemporary design

incorporates various elements of these fairly divergent architectural styles (i.e., stone, and stucco siding, wood trim, balconies, etc.).

Multi-family residential uses are conditionally permitted within the C-4 zone. Section 5.3.18 (*Residential Site Development Standards*) prescribes development criteria for residential development within the DTSP area as follows:

Residential Development Criteria for the DTSP

<b>Development Criteria</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Required or Max. Allowed</b>
<b>Lot Size<sup>1</sup></b>	2,700 sq. ft.	7,200 sq. ft.
<b>Lot Width</b>	50 ft.	60 ft.
<b>Lot Frontage</b>	8 ft.	72 ft.
<b>Lot Area per unit</b>	1,350 sq. ft.	1,450 sq. ft.
<b>FAR</b>	1.1	1.0
<b>Density</b>	32 units /acre	30 units/acre
<b>Parking Spaces<sup>2</sup></b>	2 covered 2 uncovered	2 covered 2 uncovered
<b>Open space per unit<sup>3</sup></b>	428 sq. ft.	450 sq. ft.
<b>Setbacks<sup>4</sup></b>		
• <b>Front</b>	0	15
• <b>Rear</b>	0	15
• <b>Side</b>	0	6
<b>Height</b>	19 feet	42 feet

<sup>1</sup> The property is legal-nonconforming with respect to lot size; Minimum lot area for a commercial subdivision is 6,000 sq. ft. <sup>2</sup> Section 4.7.4 of the DTSP requires landscaped screening walls between the parking area and the adjacent sidewalk for uncovered parking areas; <sup>3</sup> Open space includes private amenity areas such as decks as well as shared yard areas; <sup>4</sup> Unless a Variance is approved, the project would not conform with setbacks.

The proposed project would be substantially non-compliant with the development criteria for residential development within the DTSP area. However, if the applicant merged the property with the adjacent lot (in common ownership), more compliant redevelopment of the merged property could occur.

**Discussion**

In evaluating the project at this preliminary stage of the development review process, the focus of discussion should be on four 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?
4. Is the proposed architecture compatible with the site and surrounding area?

**1. Is the proposed land use appropriate for the site?**

Multi-family residential uses are conditionally permitted within the C-4 zone. The adjacent C-4 zoned property is developed with a small multi-family dwelling. Residential uses in commercial districts allow for alternative transportation modes, and housing diversity that reduce traffic congestion and jobs/housing imbalances.

**2. Is the proposed intensity of land uses appropriate for the site?**

The project would exceed the allowable density and total floor area for residential development with the DTSP area. However, if the applicant merged the property with the adjacent lot (in common ownership), more compliant redevelopment of the merged property could occur.

**3. Is the arrangement or distribution of proposed land uses appropriate for the site?**

The project would not meet the minimum requirements for lot area per unit, open space per unit, setbacks, frontage improvements and landscaping as specified within the DTSP. As discussed above, in order to meet the current standards identified in the DTSP, small lots would need to be merged to facilitate large scale redevelopment of the downtown area (i.e., larger lots could accommodate required setbacks, and larger scale redevelopment would have the economies of scale necessary to cover the costs of significant frontage improvements). However, the anticipated Belmont Village Zoning (BVP) may include provisions that accommodate small scale redevelopment of project sites.

**4. Is the proposed architecture compatible with the surrounding area?**

The proposed contemporary design of the residential units would be generally consistent with the one and two story commercial building in the surrounding area.

**Neighborhood Outreach**

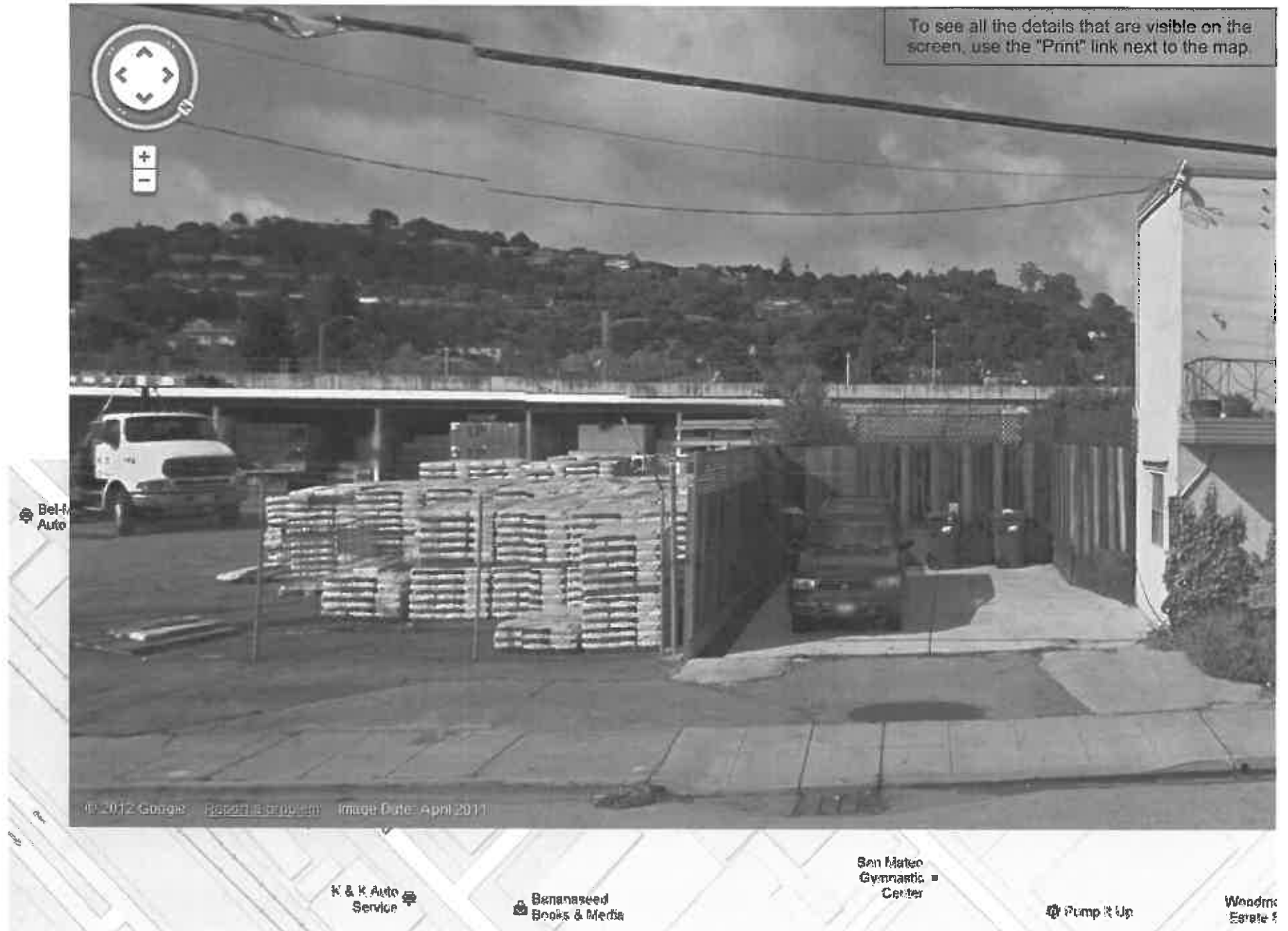
No public contact beyond posting of the agenda was initiated by the City in preparation for Preliminary Review. The applicant has received a copy of this report.

**Recommendation**

The expressed purpose of Preliminary Review is to, “inform the decision makers about the project and its general features...” Commission members 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 Commission members be directed only at the four issues raised in this memo.

**Attachments**

- I. Conceptual Plans, Photographs and Maps



May 22, 2012

Mr. Rob Gill  
City of Belmont  
One Twin Pines Lane Suite 110  
Belmont, CA 94002

REF. APN 045-241-220

Dear Rob,

It is my intention to build two one bedroom units on this 2,700 Square Foot Parcel. Ideally, the living units will be located on the second floor with two enclosed parking spaces below the residences.

Due to the triangular-shape of the parcel, I would like to conform to the basic style of the adjacent building which I also own, that building is also a two story structure and residential in profile. Access to the subject property may necessitate either a lot line adjustment or filing an "intent to grant an easement" over my existing parcel.

As to the size of the living space, each unit will be approximately 700 Sq. Ft. Foundation support to the structure will be via concrete piers and thus provide ample clearance for below structure covered parking. Garage access will be through a one car door, each car will be parked at a slight angle. Ceiling height for the garage will be less than 8 feet in order to achieve 10 foot interior ceilings in the second floor living area.

Lastly, I have owned my present building since 1987 and acquired the empty parcel from Union Pacific Railroad in 2000. My experience of living on Old County Road has helped me to gain the knowledge that the location offers many residential pluses including: access to the transportation corridor, ease of local shopping, and use of downtown services.

Please let me know if you need any additional information.

Best Regards,  
  
Ron DuBois

**OLD COUNTY ROAD**  
(WIDTH VARIES)

P.O.B.

S44°42'00"E 75.00'

S44°21'00"E

28.03'

LANDS OF  
EZZAT  
1999  
TRUST

A.P.N. 045-241-230

LANDS OF  
DUBOIS  
5,453 SQ. FT.  
0.13 ACRE

A.P.N. 045-241-220

1,430 SQ. FT.  
PROPOSED BUILDING

S45°39'00"W 53.93'

34

29

N45°18'00"E 54.09'

67.00'

N44°42'00"W

100.70'

30

LANDS OF  
BRUTSCHE

31

32

33

**SOUTHERN PACIFIC CO. RAILROAD**



SCALE: 1" = 20'



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**1324 OLD COUNTY ROAD  
BELMONT, CALIFORNIA**

**SAN MATEO COUNTY**

APN: 045-241-060

FEBRUARY 2002

