

CITY OF SAN JOSÉ, CALIFORNIA
Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement
801 North First Street, Room 400
San José, California 95110-1795

Hearing Date/Agenda Number
P.C. 2/25/04 Item: 3.g.

File Number
PDC 02-057

Application Type
Planned Development Rezoning

Council District
3

Planning Area SNI Area
Central Washington

Assessor's Parcel Number(s)
264-34-043, -044, -045, -046

STAFF REPORT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Completed by: John Davidson

Location: Northwest corner of Almaden Avenue and W. Virginia Street.

Gross Acreage: 0.47

Net Acreage: 0.47

Net Density: 21.3 DU/AC

Existing Zoning: CN Neighborhood Commercial

Existing Use: Restaurant, two single-family residences

Proposed Zoning: A(PD) Planned Development

Proposed Use: up to 10 single-family attached dwelling units

GENERAL PLAN

Completed by: JED

Land Use/Transportation Diagram Designation
Medium High Density Residential (12-25 DU/AC)

Project Conformance:
 Yes No
 See Analysis and Recommendations

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING

Completed by: JED

North: Single-family residential

CN Neighborhood Commercial

East: Auto Repair Shop

CN Neighborhood Commercial

South: Duplex residential

R-M Multiple Residence and A(PD) Planned Development

West: Single-Family Residential

R-M Multiple Residence

ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS

Completed by: JED

Environmental Impact Report certified
 Negative Declaration circulated on February 5, 2004
 Negative Declaration adopted on

Exempt
 Environmental Review Incomplete

FILE HISTORY

Completed by: JED

Annexation Title: Original City

Date: March 27, 1850

PLANNING DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION

Approval
 Approval with Conditions
 Denial

Date: _____

Approved by: _____
 Action
 Recommendation

APPLICANT

Roland Cruz
T Square Consulting Group
3319 Pinnacle Drive
San Jose, CA 95132

OWNER

Lucia Wu
12175 #C Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road
Saratoga, CA 95070

PUBLIC AGENCY COMMENTS RECEIVED

Completed by: JED

Department of Public Works

See attached memo

Other Departments and Agencies

See attached memos from Fire Department, Police Department, Environmental Services Department, Airport Department and Airport Land Use Commission.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

None received

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BACKGROUND

The applicant is proposing a Planned Development Rezoning to allow up to 10 single-family attached dwelling units on an 0.47-gross acre site at the northwest corner of Almaden Avenue and W. Virginia Streets. The western edge of the site abuts an alley that runs parallel with Almaden Avenue. Two single-family residences and a restaurant currently occupy the site, which is located in the Washington Strong Neighborhoods Initiative (SNI) area.

The site is surrounded by single-family residences to the north, an auto repair shop across Almaden Avenue to the east, residential uses to the south across W. Virginia Street, and single-family residences to the west. The site is less than 2,000 feet (five blocks) from the Virginia Street light rail station.

The project consists of ten – three story townhouses, in two five-unit buildings. The units are three stories in height, and are approximately 1,480 square feet in size. The front doors of the southern building will front onto W. Virginia Street, while the front doors of the northern building will be accessed from a pedestrian walkway. All of the townhouse units have two attached covered parking spaces. In addition to front yards, all of the townhouse units will have two distinct balconies, providing approximately 200 square feet of private open space.

The project will have a single central driveway, which will run from Almaden Avenue through the project to the alley on the opposite side of the property. A total of four guest parking spaces would be provided, which all would be accessed from the alley for a total of 24 parking spaces provided for the ten units.

Because the project is for up to 10 dwelling units, the proposal is exempt from affordability requirements normally imposed in SNI redevelopment areas.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

An Initial Study was prepared for this project and a Mitigated Negative Declaration was circulated by the Director of Planning on February 5, 2004. The Initial Study included an archaeological reconnaissance and a noise report. Mitigation measures identified in these reports have been incorporated into the project.

Two single-family houses and a restaurant currently exist on site. None of the buildings has been identified as a historic resource on the City's Historic Resources Inventory. Staff has performed an in-house analysis and determined that none of the proposed structures merits inclusion on the City's Historic Resources Inventory.

The archaeological report included a literature search and a field reconnaissance. The literature search was performed using the maps and records at the California Historical Resources Information System, located at Sonoma State University. These documents were researched for any record of archaeological remains in and around the project. No archaeological sites are recorded within the project boundaries. A field reconnaissance was performed in March, 2003, with no prehistoric materials found as part of the surface reconnaissance.

If in the course of construction, any Native American human remains were discovered and would be subject to disturbance, the remains would be removed and analyzed. The remains would be reburied in consultation and agreement with the Native American Most Likely Descendant designated by the Native American Heritage Commission.

A noise assessment study was prepared as a part of the Initial Study process. Background noise on the project site originates primarily from traffic along Almaden Avenue, from Highway 280, and from airplane noise overhead. In order to mitigate interior noise levels that exceed 45 db DNL, feasible noise control measures such as windows with a Sound Transmission Class (STC) rating of 28 will be used. Noise levels for exterior private open spaces are anticipated to be 62 db DNL, which meets the City's short-term noise criteria of 65 db DNL.

GENERAL PLAN CONFORMANCE

The project, at 21.3 DU/AC, is consistent with the San Jose 2020 General Plan Land Use/Transportation Diagram designation of Medium High Density Residential (12-25 dwelling units/acre). The proposed buildings are less than 40 feet in height, which is also consistent with the General Plan.

ANALYSIS

The primary project issues include conformance with the Washington SNI Plan, and particularly the Washington Alley Improvement Plan and conformance with the Residential Design Guidelines.

Washington SNI Plan. The vision of the Washington SNI Plan is to revitalize the Washington neighborhood by creating and maintaining a safe, crime-free, high-quality living environment, by providing safe places for the community to interact and children to play. The number two item on the Washington Neighborhood SNI plan Top Ten list is to develop a action program for funding and scheduling the improvement or closure of all area alleys. The Neighborhood Revitalization Plan includes an Alley Improvement Plan, which contains guidelines for both public improvements and private development along alleys.

Washington Alley Improvement Plan. The purpose of the Washington Alley Improvement Plan is to improve the function, appearance, and safety of alleys in the Washington Neighborhood. Connection of the project to the alley improves the safety of the alley by offering natural surveillance from residents using the alley. The open fencing proposed, along with end unit windows facing the alley will also increase safety through natural surveillance, per the Alley Improvement Plan. The appearance of the alley will be enhanced through the installation of landscaping, and by proper maintenance and locking of the trash enclosure area. In all, it is staff's opinion that the proposed project will be positive improvement in the safety and appearance of the neighboring alley.

Residential Design Guidelines. The proposed project is a hybrid of rowhouses, which orient to the street, and garden townhouses, which have a separate pedestrian circulation system. For the purposes of comparison, the project will be compared to the garden townhouse section of the Residential Design Guidelines. However, the proposed project is significantly more dense than the typical garden townhouse project, at 21 DU/AC versus 16 DU/AC for a garden townhouse project. The southern block of buildings orients towards the street, with visible front doors and pathways to each unit, creating an urban streetscape per the Residential Design Guidelines.

The proposed project includes 25-foot front and rear setbacks, and a 10-foot corner side setback, exceeding the requirements of the setback guidelines for townhouses. In suburban locations, the Residential Design Guidelines also normally call for a 2 to 1 (setback to height) setback ratio for proposed projects adjacent to single-family rear yards. If this standard were applied along the northern property line, the project would have to maintain a 70-foot setback. Given the fact that this is a high-density, infill project, it is staff's opinion that the setback requirement is not appropriate. The proposed 25-foot setback is a reasonable separation from the adjacent residences, given the context. In addition, a row of trees will be planted along the northern property line to screen the adjacent residence from the proposed project.

The Zoning Ordinance and Residential Design Guideline requirements for multi-family projects with two-car garages is 2.6 spaces per unit, with an allowance for 10% parking reduction based upon the project's proximity to an existing light rail stop. Taking into account the transit 10% parking reduction, the project should provide 23 spaces, and provides 24 spaces.

The Residential Design Guidelines call for 300 square feet of private open space for each unit. In the proposed project, each unit has two separate balconies, providing a total of 200 square feet of private open space. In addition, all units have a semi-private front yard, approximately 500 square feet in area. Staff feels that this combination of private and semi-private open space is in substantial conformance with the Residential Design Guidelines requirements, especially in light of the proposed density of the project.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

A public hearing notice for the project was published in a local newspaper and mailed to all property owners and tenants within 500 feet of the subject site. The applicant also brought the proposed project to the Washington Neighborhood SNI meeting on February 12, 2004. Neighborhood concerns focused on making the alleyway as blight-free as possible, and the likelihood of cut-through traffic.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning staff recommends the Planning Commission forward a recommendation of approval and the City Council adopt an ordinance rezoning the subject site for the following reasons:

1. The proposed rezoning conforms to the subject site's General Plan Land Use Diagram Designation of Medium High Density Residential (12-25 dwelling units/acre).
2. The proposed project will further the goals and policies of the General Plan's Housing Strategy by providing high-density infill housing in close proximity to transit.
3. The proposed project conforms to the applicable Residential Design Guidelines.
4. The proposed project implements the Washington SNI Plan, including the Washington Alley Improvement

Plan.

207-02: JED