



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember
Donald Rocha

SUBJECT: ALMADEN RANCH

DATE: March 20, 2012

Approved Don Rocha Date 3/20/12

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the Planning Commission recommendation with the following additional action:

1. Direct the City Manager to bring forward a proposal through the capital budget process to allocate \$50,000 in District 9 parks funds as seed money for preliminary work on a pedestrian bridge that could provide east/west access over the Guadalupe River between Cherry Ave. and Chynoweth Ave. This amount would match the developer's offer to voluntarily contribute \$50,000 for the same purpose.
2. Amend the development standards dated February 7, 2012, such that the parking requirements section on page 2 is revised as follows:
 - a. allow on-site parking 10% beyond the minimum requirement without triggering additional site design measures
 - b. remove mention of green roofs as one potential site design measure
 - c. change the reference to "solar panel carports in the surface parking lot" to "solar panels on buildings."

ANALYSIS

I recommend that the Council approve the project with the two additions recommended above. The first concerns a request from surrounding residents that the City pursue construction of a pedestrian bridge across the Guadalupe River. At the Planning Commission meeting, residents pointed out that a pedestrian bridge would enhance pedestrian access not just for area residents, but also for users of the nearby light rail station, river trail, and proposed retail project. One speaker pointed out that San Jose's new general plan sets ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets, and that if the City is truly committed to achieving them, it needs to start prioritizing pedestrian improvements.

In an effort to begin moving on a potential pedestrian bridge, I recommend directing the Administration to prepare for Council consideration an allocation of District 9 parks money in next year's capital budget as seed money for preliminary work on the project. While the developer is not required to contribute to a pedestrian bridge, the developer has graciously offered to lend some voluntary support in the amount of \$50,000, in addition to consultation on the potential bridge project.

Second, I recommend that we make some adjustments to the parking requirements contained in the development standards. In the course of public outreach on this project, the City and the developer have heard repeatedly that residents want the new center to be not just a giant parking lot, but a place where the community can gather. The developer responded to this input by adding additional tenant spaces along the project's street frontages and creating open space where the community can congregate. As part of an effort to ensure that, as we move to the permit stage, the size of the parking lots remains proportional to the other amenities on the site, staff added a development standard that required additional design improvements if the number of parking spaces exceeds the required number by 5%.

I support this approach to parking in concept, and I strongly support retaining the place-making elements in the planned development permit, but I also appreciate that the developers have a legitimate interest in having some flexibility around parking as they attempt to attract tenants. Accordingly, I recommend changing the threshold for additional design improvements from 5% to 10%, and removing two specific references to design improvements — green roofs and solar panel carports. Nevertheless, I believe this approach to parking is very creative, and at some point may merit a broader discussion as to how the City's parking standards can evolve as we implement the new general plan in order to ensure that developers and property owners in San Jose know up front potential development standards that could have significant costs.