



THE CITY OF
NOVATO
CALIFORNIA

SPECIAL Planning Commission Meeting

Location: Novato City Hall, 901 Sherman Avenue

May 22, 2017

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Novato, CA 94945
415/899-8900
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www.novato.org

Mayor
Denise Athas
Mayor Pro Tem
Josh Fryday
Councilmembers
Pam Drew
Pat Eklund
Eric Lucan

City Manager
Regan M. Candelario

Present: Susan Wernick, Chair
Curtis Havel, Vice Chair
Dan Dawson
Justin Derby
Robert Jordan
Jay Strauss
Peter Tiernan

Absent: None

Staff Present: Steve Marshall, Planning Manager
Hans Grunt, Senior Planner
Bob Brown, Community Development Director
Veronica Nebb, Senior Assistant City Attorney

CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE / ROLL CALL

APPROVAL OF FINAL AGENDA

Motion/Second: Tiernan/Strauss to approve agenda as presented. Motion passed 7-0 (Ayes: Wernick, Havel, Dawson, Derby, Jordan, Strauss, and Tiernan)

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

CONSENT CALENDAR: None

CONTINUED ITEMS: None

NEW ITEMS:

- OAKMONT SENIOR LIVING (HG)**
CEQA MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION
P2016-010; GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT REZONING
MASTER PLAN
PRECISE DEVELOPMENT PLAN
LAND DIVISION
DESIGN REVIEW

1461 SOUTH NOVATO BLVD; APN 151-022-09

Conduct a public hearing to consider making a recommendation to the City Council regarding a mitigated negative declaration, general plan land use map amendment, a rezoning to Planned District including a master plan, precise development plan, design review, and tentative parcel map, to allow construction of a two-story (31'+/-) tall, 72,600sf+/- residential care facility for the elderly supporting 50 senior assisted living units and 28 senior memory care units located on the northern 2.78 acres of vacant land adjacent to Quest Church, 1461 South Novato Boulevard.

Senior Planner Grunt presented the staff report.

Bill Mabry, Oakmont Senior Living, and Pete Wertz, landscape architect, presented an overview of the project and its design.

The commissioners asked a variety of questions about the project regarding:

- dimensions of the walkway connecting to Johnson Street;
- fire access through connection to Johnson Street;
- fencing used to restrict access through Johnson Street;
- parking arrangement between employees, visitors, and residents;
- type of screening offered behind the assisted living building;
- who gets to stay in the facility - Novato residents
- resident transition to memory care;
- other Oakmont facilities in Marin;
- consideration of traffic impacts with school traffic;
- number of employees seems low – only 16 employees;

The public hearing was opened.

John Trumbull – concerned about easement around large oak tree – construction could impinge on tree roots; tree needs to be saved since its historical to the Methodist Church; keep sidewalk as narrow as possible and away from the oak tree.

Andrew Regis – member of Quest Church – expressed support for the project.

Dr. Al Croser – concerned about project's impact on mature magnolia tree. Maybe move the tree – but it won't stand moving. Tree provides screening of Oakmont building. Consider the exact path of the roadway and look to save the tree.

Matt – attends Quest Church. Exciting, colorful project. Can project stand up to earthquake on San Andrea fault. Big believer in climate change – can building be raised.

The public hearing was closed.

The commission asked additional clarifying questions about the configuration of the Johnson Street connection and use of permeable pavers to protect tree roots.

Motion/Second: Strauss/Tiernan adopt resolution recommending the City Council adopt a mitigated negative declaration for Oakmont Senior Living. Motion Passed: 7-0 (Ayes: Wernick, Havel, Dawson, Derby, Jordan, Strauss, and Tiernan)

Motion/Second: Dawson/Strauss adopt resolution recommending the City Council approve amending the General Plan land use designation applicable to the project site. Motion Passed: 7-0 (Ayes: Wernick, Havel, Dawson, Derby, Jordan, Strauss, and Tiernan)

Motion/Second: Tiernan/Derby adopt resolution recommending the City Council approve the master plan proposed for Oakmont Senior Living. Motion Passed: 7-0 (Ayes: Wernick, Havel, Dawson, Derby, Jordan, Strauss, and Tiernan)

Motion/Second: Strauss/Derby to adopt resolution recommending the City Council approve the precise development plan with modification of conditions of approval nos. 34 and 41 to address an 8-foot pathway. Motion Passed: 7-0 (Ayes: Wernick, Havel, Dawson, Derby, Jordan, Strauss, and Tiernan)

Motion/Second: Strauss/Tiernan to adopt resolution recommending the City Council approve the vesting tentative map for Oakmont Senior Living with modification of conditions of approval nos. 34 and 41 to address an 8-foot pathway. Motion Passed: 7-0 (Ayes: Wernick, Havel, Dawson, Derby, Jordan, Strauss, and Tiernan)

GENERAL BUSINESS:

2. [DOWNTOWN NOVATO SMART STATION – PHASE II.](#)

Consider providing comments to the City Council regarding completion of the Downtown Novato SMART Station – Phase II.

Commissioner Havel introduced the item by noting a desire to look forward on a long range issue since there is an opportunity to prepare the downtown depot site for the future – noted General Plan policies encouraging pedestrian amenities, gathering place – all related to downtown. At a point in town history where there is an opportunity to prepare site for future. Commission should voice opinion on downtown station.

Commissioner Havel referenced a letter from Tina McMillan expressing opinion about Planning Commission having no business discussing a funding issue – he disagrees. SMART station downtown in a signal to investment – downtown is ready to do something. People will want to come to downtown. What is more small town than train coming to a historic depot.

Commissioner Jordan – Sat on Measure F Committee- resigned due to use of Measure F funds for depot. Actually, good idea for station downtown, but its overly romanticized. SMART controls whether the train stops. Fiscally not responsible, but does create experience for downtown. Doesn't want to oversell what it will do. Spending a lot of money to increase income for downtown merchants at the expense of the rest of Novato. Better place to spend money. Voters wanted Measure F money spent on other items – police, parks, etc. North Marin station a mistake should have been downtown. All that said, good to have downtown – wouldn't vote against it.

Commissioner Derby – Question of investment – downtown Novato will never be next to a freeway – not that type of attraction. Having something like SMART station in downtown is a selling point – might be a bullet point in investment memo – attract investment.

Commissioner Tiernan – We are looking for tourism brought weekend train runs. Having a station downtown makes sense, it is almost a no brainer – we need to draw people downtown. There is an urgency to the issue due to a grant being available. The City Council will deal with priorities. We look at transportation, place, and identity – endorses station in downtown.

Commissioner Dawson – Commuter stops support business – not just weekend trips. SMART’s schedule has issues, but these can be resolved. Waiting until some other time would have implications on cost – grant match and escalation of construction cost. Potential missed opportunity. Station is an anchor for downtown – spot for people to visit and patronize businesses. Investment gets to priorities and long term benefit.

Commissioner Strauss – Issue is not monetary really, although understands there are concerns. Politics is the allocation of scarce resources. What do we want this town to be like in 10-, 25-, 50-years. We want a vibrant and soulful downtown. We need to do this for the community. Yes, fiscal issue is tight, but the money is available. The expenditure would fit in with the intent of Measure F. Creates a sense of a real Novato downtown.

Commissioner Wernick – Frist came to Council and told them not to do downtown station. Then there was a survey and read the responses. Respondents were overwhelmingly in support – they not only want the train, but would ride it. This changed my perspective on issue. It would be criminal to stop at this point. People want assurance the station is happening. We need people to support retail. Read there is fear of increased housing density – asked if Community Development Director Brown could address the issue.

Director Brown stated the station would not result in high density housing – the city retains local zoning control. There have been state law changes that attempt to incentivize higher density housing near transit, but does not change local control. RHNA figures are based on formulas that factor for transit facilities, but make a minor difference in housing nos. RHNA allocation has been going down. Even if there was an uptick of residential units due to the station, the trend has been downward.

Director Brown explained transit oriented development – within walking distance of train/bus service, designed to encourage walkability, higher density/floor area ratio, buildings at the sidewalk – primarily issues of location and design. Current zoning encourages transit oriented development.

Motion/Second: Strauss/Havel recommending the City Council approve moving forward with the downtown train station and accept federal grant funds and find necessary funds to complete the project. 6-0-1 (Ayes: Wernick, Havel, Dawson, Derby, Strauss, and Tiernan; Abstain: Jordan)

UPCOMING AGENDAS AND QUORUMS: Planning Manager Marshall covered future agenda items.

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 9:35 PM.