

**COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT**

DATE: July 28, 2010

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Planning Staff

SUBJECT: INFORMATIONAL ITEM: Discussion of the proposed Planning Department's review process and procedures of the Ascension Heights Subdivision Alternative Project located in the unincorporated San Mateo Highlands area of San Mateo County. The project was remanded to the Planning Commission by the Board of Supervisors in consideration of an appeal of the Planning Commission's denial of the project. A reduced, alternative plan is currently under development by the applicant for the Planning Commission's eventual consideration. A re-circulated Environmental Impact Report is required. The project site is located on the corner of Bel Aire Road and Ascension Drive.

County File Number: PLN 2002-00517 (O'Rourke/San Mateo Real Estate and Construction)

PROPOSAL

The applicant is developing a revised plan to present to the Planning Commission for its consideration. Before any plan is formally presented to the Planning Commission for final consideration, it will need to go through the review process, which includes planning analysis, environmental review, and public review. Before starting this process, staff is sharing an outline of the process in order to receive input from the Commission, and to make adjustments to the process if necessary.

RECOMMENDATION

Receive staff's presentation and open the public meeting and accept comments, and provide feedback to staff on the proposed process.

BACKGROUND

Report Prepared By: James A. Castañeda, AICP, Telephone 650/363-1853

Applicant: San Mateo Real Estate and Construction

Owner: John O'Rourke

Location: Six contiguous parcels of property (APN 041-111-130, -160, -270, -280, -320, and -360), consisting of a total of approximately 13.25 acres (gross), located in the unincorporated area of San Mateo County known as the San Mateo Highlands. The subject site is bordered to the west by Bel Aire Road, Ascension Drive to the south, existing single-family development to the north and west.

Parcels Size: 041-111-130: 16,117 sq. ft.
041-111-160: 10,890 sq. ft.
041-111-270: 70,567 sq. ft.
041-111-280: 61,855 sq. ft.
041-111-320: 194,278 sq. ft.
041-111-360: 229,997 sq. ft.

Existing Zoning: R-1/S-8 (Single-Family Residential/7,500 sq. ft. minimum lot size)

General Plan Designation: Medium Low Density Residential (2.4 – 6.0 dwelling units/acre).

Setting: The subject site is located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Bel Aire Road and Ascension Drive. The project site is predominately situated on a hillside with slopes averaging 40%. The subject site is surround by single-family dwellings, including the Baywood Park neighborhood to the northeast, the Enchanted Hills neighborhood to the southeast and southwest, and the Starlite Heights neighborhood to the northwest. The College of San Mateo campus is located less than 1/4-mile northeast of the subject site via Parrott Drive. At the center of the subject site is an existing potable water tank owned and operated by the California Water Service Company located on a separate 22,500 sq. ft. parcel. The water tank is also utilized as a cellular communication facility by various operators. This parcel is not part of the proposed project. The site was graded over 40 years ago, which consisted of excavating the sides of the hill for the construction of Ascension Drive and Bel Aire Road. Eight-foot wide benches at 30-foot intervals were created along Ascension Drive as a result. Surface runoff from these benches has eroded over the years. The site is predominately characterized by grassland, small brush and trees such as oak, pine and eucalyptus. A small grove of eucalyptus trees is located on the south-east side of the site and pine trees have been planted around the water tank facility.

Chronology:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Action</u>
February 2002	- Pre-application workshop.
May 2002	- Second pre-application workshop.
August 28, 2002	- Application submitted.
December 4, 2003	- Public Environmental Impact Report (EIR) Scoping session held.
September 2004	- Administrative Draft EIR submitted for staff's review.

- March 14, 2005 - County Fire identified the need for a secondary fire access road.
- July 16, 2007 - Revised site plans and updated materials provided that included a proposed Emergency Vehicle Access (EVA) route.
- September 2008 - Second Administrative Draft EIR submitted for staff's review.
- June 22, 2009 - Public Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) published.
- September 9, 2009 - Public hearing held to discuss the DEIR and take public comments.
- November 20, 2009 - Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) published and released.
- December 9, 2009 - Planning Commission public hearing to consider project and certification of FEIR. FEIR was not certified due to non-conformance to specific General Plan policies, and geotechnical and drainage/erosion impacts, and visual impacts.
- December 23, 2009 - Appeal filed by applicant.
- June 29, 2010 - Board of Supervisors remanded the project back to the Planning Commission to begin review process of a revised plan.

DISCUSSION

The applicant appealed the Planning Commission's December 9, 2009 denial of the original proposed project with the intent of producing a revised plan that considers the concerns raised at that hearing. The proposed plan is still conceptual, and once refined, will require a full review, similar in scope to that of a new project. This would require review by all relevant County Departments and other agencies for analysis in their respective areas. Given the change of scope in the project, a re-circulated Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be required. The process of producing and releasing a re-circulated EIR is similar to that of the original EIR, where a draft EIR is made available to the public for comment, followed by the preparation of a final EIR that responds to those comments.

In anticipation of this review process, staff would like to encourage community input and involvement while the plan is still conceptual. This would allow the applicant and Planning staff to consider changes and adjustments to the plan prior to the Planning Commission's final consideration. This would also give staff an opportunity to discuss project specifics and recommended conditions of approval, which can be developed and discussed as part of ongoing community involvement.

Therefore, staff is proposing that community workshops be held as part of the public outreach. They could be in an open house format held within the neighborhood where members of the community can review plans, provide input and start a dialogue on specifics of the subdivision's design. Staff would be present to provide information regarding the planning process, county

zoning regulations and processes, and environmental review. Time and location would be arranged with community members, stressing that the location would be within the community and in the evening to allow greater flexibility to area residence. At the moment, staff proposes that at least two workshops would be required, but the total number would be determined based on the results of the earlier meetings, as well as staff availability and resources. In addition, staff will be amendable to holding individual meetings with homeowner associations, small groups, and other interested individuals.

In addition to workshops, staff will provide, as it becomes available, information online, such as the latest news, documents, and supplemental information regarding the project. Currently, the site www.smcplanning.org/ascension is established for this purpose. Staff is also exploring additional methods of providing news and information to the community.

CONCLUSION

While the timeline for the project is still in development and remains dependent on retaining an environmental consultant to produce the re-circulated EIR, staff believes the project will take approximately six to nine months to reach the Planning Commission for final consideration. Community outreach workshops will take places earlier in the process and continue throughout as necessary.

Staff wants to keep the review process as dynamic as possible, while maintaining structure and predictability. The goal is to foster ongoing dialogue and discussion throughout the process.

ATTACHMENT

A. Board of Supervisors Decision Letter, June 29, 2010

JAC:cdn – JACU0528_WCU.DOC

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July 9, 2010

Mr. Dennis Thomas
San Mateo Real Estate & Construction
1777 Borel Place, Suite 330
San Mateo, CA 94402

PROJECT FILE

Mr. John O'Rourke
29 San Francisco Street
Brisbane, CA 94005

Dear Mr. Thomas and Mr. O'Rourke:

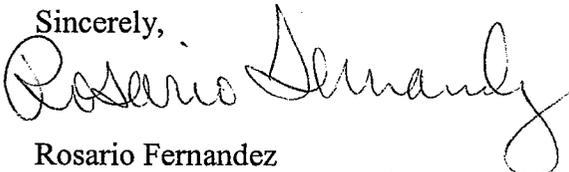
Subject: LETTER OF DECISION
File Number: PLN 2002-00517
Location: Bel Aire Road and Ascension Drive, San Mateo
APNs: 041-111-130, -160, -270, -280, -320, -360

On June 29, 2010, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors considered an appeal of the Planning Commission's denial of a Major Subdivision and Grading Permit, and certification of a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR), for the proposed Ascension Heights Subdivision located in the unincorporated San Mateo Highlands area of San Mateo County. The project includes the subdivision of the 13.25-acre subject site into 27 legal parcels for development of 25 single-family dwellings. An alternative concept design plan has been proposed for consideration.

Based on information provided by staff and evidence presented at the hearing, the Board of Supervisors remanded the project to the Planning Commission for its evaluation and consideration of the alternative project, submitted by the applicant, to address outstanding issues and to address compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

If you have questions regarding this matter, please contact the Project Planner, James Castañeda at 650/363-1853.

Sincerely,



Rosario Fernandez
Planning Commission Secretary
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cc: Linda Ozanne
Marilyn Haithcox
Peter Lawrence