

Shape Our Fremont

Apartments Proposed for Ohlone College



SteelWave LLC, a development firm based in Foster City, has leased approximately 15 acres of land across the front of the Ohlone College campus in Mission San Jose and is preparing a proposal to build 275 apartments and 6,500 square feet of commercial space on the property. The college and developer have been holding a series of community meetings to learn what the public thinks about the idea.

The proposal

The proposed project would extend about 1,880 feet along the east side of Mission Boulevard, from the northern edge of the campus to Pine Street, and back from Mission about 400 feet into the campus. A small parcel north of Witherly Lane/Anza Street would be developed with multi-story commercial retail buildings that could include restaurants, cafes, a grocery, and offices.

The apartments would be located in two "court areas" between Witherly Lane and Pine Street. Each court would have several rows of multi-story apartments interspersed with walkways and a variety of amenities. Interior roadways with entrances on Witherly and Pine would provide vehicle access throughout the project. A central walkway would extend from Mission into the campus between the two residential areas to provide an open space where some of the historic olive trees would be preserved.

Most of the apartments would be rented at the prevailing above-moderate-income (market rate) level of affordability. According to information available at the most recent community meeting on August 15, "... the college plans to designate at least 16 of the units for moderate-income seniors and school facility and staff". None of the apartments would be specifically designated for student use.

Why do it?

Ohlone College has determined the frontage property is not needed for any foreseeable college uses and declared it to be surplus. The college would retain ownership of the land through an 80-year lease. The developer would build the project, and a property management firm would operate and maintain it. Under terms of the lease, the college would receive an annual income.

All community colleges have historically received the majority of their funding from the State of California. During periods of economic downturn, State funding can be drastically reduced. Ohlone College has stated that development of the frontage property would generate an ongoing stream of revenue that will put the school in a far better position to maintain programs and faculty under varying economic conditions.

What's next?

Although the current proposal has been under consideration for more than a year, it is still in the preliminary phase of design. There are no detailed drawings, and it has not been submitted to the City of Fremont for review.

The first and most important step may be coming in November 2018 when the developer plans to request a General Plan Amendment Screening to determine if the City wants to consider changing the land use designation from Public Facility to Medium-Density Residential. That request would be reviewed by the Planning Commission in January 2019, and by the City Council in February 2019.

If the City Council grants the request to consider a General Plan Amendment, the developer must submit a formal application and go through a complete review process that may involve another year or more.

Time to speak up

As with many large development proposals, there are a lot of points to consider. Some people may question whether the college should be developing land that it may need in the future. Others may be concerned about the impacts of such a large number of apartments on traffic, schools, and the historic character of the Mission San Jose business district. Some may point out that Fremont has already approved more than our share of above-moderate-income housing, so why should we change the General Plan to get even more?

The best time to express questions, issues, and concerns about the proposal is now, and the best way is to send them directly to the developer before November.

To learn more about the project, go to www.ohlone.edu/frontage-property -- especially view the Document link to read a detailed description of the entire review process.

To send comments to the developer, email ohlonefrontageproperty@steelwave.com

To learn more about proposed housing developments in Fremont, go to www.ShapeOurFremont.com