

Shape Our Fremont

Developers Want to Change the General Plan

Two developers are asking Fremont to change the General Plan to allow them to build market-rate housing in the northeast corner of the city. The City Council is scheduled to make a final decision on Tuesday, May 1.

Changing the Plan

The General Plan specifies the allowable land uses and densities of all properties within the city limits to ensure that Fremont has sufficient land for our residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, public facility, and open space needs.

To change the plan for an individual property requires a General Plan Amendment (GPA). To do this, an applicant must first submit a GPA Screening Request to determine if Fremont wants to consider the change. Both the Planning Commission and City Council screen the request.

If a GPA Screening Request is authorized for consideration, the proposal must then be submitted as a formal application for a full review by city staff, as well as a final review and approval by the Planning Commission and City Council. The decision is based on several factors, including the proposed benefits to the neighborhood and the community as a whole.

Canyon View

Mission Peak Homes, Inc. has submitted a formal application to build 7 single-family houses on 1.92 acres located at 243 Morrison Canyon Road in the Mission San Jose Community Plan Area. This property borders the western edge of an abandoned railroad right of way, and includes finishing the cul-de-sacs on Queso Place and Espada Place.

As a benefit to the neighborhood, two older houses on the property have already been demolished with permission of the city because they were in disrepair, and one had become a public nuisance. The applicant has chosen to pay affordable housing in-lieu fees instead of building any below-market-rate affordable housing on the property.

This proposal requires a GPA to change the land use designation from Hillside Residential to Residential Low Density. The GPA was screened and authorized for consideration in 2017. The Planning Commission recommended approval of the formal application. The City Council must now make a final decision.

To comment on this proposal, email City Staff Planner Aki Snelling at asnelling@fremont.gov

Villas of Mission

Community First, LLC, has submitted a formal application to build 13 townhouses on 0.79 acres located at 36341 Mission Boulevard in the Niles Community Plan Area. This is next to Dave's Auto Repair at Nursery Avenue.

As a benefit to the neighborhood, the applicant has reduced the height of the building closest to the existing houses on the north to two stories. At the request of the Planning Commission, the applicant will also offer one of the townhouses with deed restrictions that limit the sale price to the below-market-rate level of affordability. The rest of the units will be sold at market-rate.

This proposal requires a GPA to change the land use designation from Commercial General to Residential Multi-Family. The proposal was deemed to be complete before the GPA Screening procedure went into effect, so it did not require a pre-screening. The Planning Commission recommended approval of the formal application. The City Council must now make a final decision.

To comment on this proposal, email City Staff Planner David Wage at dwage@fremont.gov

Why Do It?

Fremont does not have to amend the General Plan for any reason. The plan was approved by the City Council in 2011 and is supposed to guide land use decisions until at least 2030.

Likewise, Fremont does not have to amend the General Plan to get more housing at the above-moderate-income level of affordability, also known as market-rate housing. Fremont has already issued more building permits for housing at that level than California asked us to build for the entire period of 2014 to 2022.

What Fremont really needs is more housing that is affordable to people in the middle and lower levels of income, also known as below-market-rate housing. That includes teachers, hospital workers, emergency services personnel, "mom and pop" store owners, and many others who provide key services in our city. It also includes individuals, young couples, and seniors who don't need large places to live.

One solution might be to require that a significant amount of deed-restricted below-market-rate housing be included in all proposals that require a General Plan Amendment. This would have the benefits of providing housing sooner than could be achieved by having developers pay in-lieu fees, and would give potential buyers and renters a wider choice of places to live.

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Fremont residents who are concerned about either of the two proposed General Plan Amendments are encouraged to attend the City Council meeting on Tuesday, May 1, at 7 p.m. at 3300 Capitol Avenue.