

Shape Our Fremont

Development Slowdown

The pace of new housing development in Fremont has decreased due to several factors. The number of projects that Fremont residents could have their say about has also declined. As a result, this is the first Shape Our Fremont article in nine months.

Construction Costs

The price of building materials, fixture supplies, and construction labor rose in the years before the pandemic hit because of the major increase in housing production in California. Those costs were intensified by the March 2020 pandemic shelter-in-place.

Developers who had already successfully contracted for labor and supplies are finishing up their projects. The 4,000 units near Warm Springs B.A.R.T. by Lennar, Valley Oaks, and Toll Brothers are nearing completion. The 3515 Walnut Apartments project with 275 units, adjacent to Paragon Apartments, is rising in the Downtown Center.

Building Permits

Project applications that have been approved must submit building specifications and get building permits approved before they can start construction. Many of the city and school impact fees must be paid at the time of final building permit issuance. Several project sites are sitting empty awaiting either their designers' plans or investors' financing. Niles Gateway, Fremont Bank Residences, and Villas of Irvington are a few examples.

Waiting it Out

Developers who see daunting construction and permit costs are letting their project sites sit empty even if the planning entitlement has been approved. When a developer has more than one project, they sometimes focus on completing the one that was furthest along last March.

No new formal planning applications have been submitted since the pandemic hit. Two requests for a Preliminary Review Procedure (PRP) have been processed but no previous PRPs have been submitted as formal applications.

Several applicants have requested Historical Reviews for old houses on lots they want to develop.

State Housing Acts

California has enacted several housing bills in the last five years that take project approval away from local city control. If a proposal follows all of the "objective" city planning rules, the city must approve it. Fremont residents no longer have a say about new housing development. The city planning staff and residents can only question whether the plans really do fulfill all the requirements.

Planned Districts or projects that require a General Plan Amendment still must be approved by the City Council.

SiliconSage Bankruptcy

The Centerville project of 165 residential units and a commercial front on Fremont Blvd. is now under receivership due to SiliconSage Builders' bankruptcy. The approved entitlement is being offered for sale by the court-assigned receiver to a new developer who would take over the grading, building, and selling of the units.

SiliconSage's Osgood Residences is almost complete and the receiver is hopeful of a sale. The nearby Osgood II project had not been approved yet so it is only the land that is subject to sale.

Starting to Pick Up

Several Affordable Housing developments are finally starting to be built. Grading has begun for the apartment building portion of the Granite Ridge project on Paseo Padre at Sequoia Road. The Irvington Senior Housing site near the post office is also being graded. City Center Apartments near Washington High School is up and being finished.

A few development applicants have resumed their review with scaled down plans. The proposal for The Argonaut, at the corner of Mowry Avenue and Argonaut Way, was revised to lower the building to five stories and reduce the total units to 55. Mission Paradise, at the southwest corner of Washington Boulevard and Ellsworth Street, was decreased from 20 to 14 units.

Robson Homes has submitted a Housing Crisis Act Preliminary Application (HCA) for a mixed-use project in Mission San Jose on the same parcel that they had previously asked for a General Plan Amendment to build only townhouses. An HCA Preliminary Application certifies a date that an application is complete and thus subject to housing ordinances in place at that time. It is not the formal planning application that will go through the review process.

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Check on www.ShapeOurFremont.com for the latest status of Fremont's housing development.