

Shape Our Fremont

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Niles Gateway Development of Old Henkel/Schuckl Cannery Property

Valley Oaks Partners wants to build the Niles Gateway mixed-use development on the old industrial property at the southern entrance to downtown Niles. The six-acre property was the site of the Ellsworth Packing Company, Schuckl Cannery, American Chemical Point Paint Company, and Henkel Corporation.

Community Meeting Comments and Concerns

In January 2014, the developer held a community meeting to give Niles residents a chance to hear about early project plans and to voice their wishes and concerns. The proposal presented was to be a primarily residential development. The developer said that there would be no building or roadway facing the east entrance to town where Niles Boulevard goes under the railroad tracks and turns north. The environmental clean-up of the site was described.

The community's strongest concern was about vehicular access through the existing neighborhood via Second St. or Third St. and Chase Ct. The developer asked what kind of feel residents would prefer in the new development. The comments included "not high(er)-density housing," "want actual houses with yards," "sunlight and air," and "Niles wants to remain a village."



Proposed Development Plans

The development application is now complete and will be reviewed by the Planning Commission in January. The project plans show a mixed-use development of residential units, live-work units, and retail space. There will be 85 townhouses in the main residential area to the south. To the north, there will be a "Creative-Retail-Artist-Flex-Tenancy" (CRAFT) building with a community center, 9 live-work units, 4 townhouses, and a restaurant with two apartments above. The view from the railroad underpass will be of the community center building.

Traffic Access

Access to the development streets will be either directly off Niles Blvd. at the north end of the property or at Chase Ct. off the end of Third St. The developer is asking the city to vacate the dead-end section of Niles Blvd. that currently accesses Alameda Creek so that it can be turned into a linear park with no vehicle access or parking. No explanation was given as to why they don't plan to use the end of Niles Blvd. as an access point rather than use it for a linear park.

The traffic review said a left-turn pocket is warranted from the north-bound lane of Niles Blvd. into the new entrance to the development. There was no call for any stop signs or traffic lights near the railroad underpass.

On-street parking is proposed along Niles Blvd. in front of the CRAFT building. When you drive south looking for a free space and you find none available, there will be no place to make a legal U-turn in order to drive back north to enter the Niles Blvd. entrance into the development. On nights when there is an event being held in the new community center, parking will be hard to find.



Foundry and Cannery Styles

Townhouse Design

There are two exterior styles proposed for the two- and three-story residential townhouses - the Foundry and the Cannery. Both are sharply angled, urban-tech architecture. The Foundry style has gray metal siding. Most of the buildings are six-plexes.

Amongst all the eclectic building styles in Niles, no other buildings have a similar architecture. This gateway to Niles is styled after past industrial uses rather than reflecting Niles' current village feel.

Housing Density

The current General Plan Land Use Designation is Light Industrial. The developer has requested a General Plan Amendment to change the designation to a Commercial section and a Residential-Medium section. The residential section would be allowed a density of between 14.6 and 29.9 dwelling units per acre. The proposed 85 townhomes would occupy 5.43 acres of the site for a density of 15.6 du/ac.

City Review Hearings

Because the property lies within the Niles Historic Overlay District, the project will go before the Historical Architectural Review Board. It will be reviewed for conformance with the Niles Design Guidelines and Regulations. Then the Planning Commission and City Council will review the project as a whole.

Tentative Hearing Dates:

Jan. 15, 2015 Historical Architectural Review Board

Jan. 22, 2015 Planning Commission

Feb. 10, 2015 City Council

Email your comments and concerns to the city project planner Clifford Nguyen at cnguyen@fremont.gov regarding NILES GATEWAY (PLN2014-00338)

For information about this and other proposed residential developments, go to:

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