

Shape Our Fremont

Irvington Area Plan Update

On June 27, the Fremont Planning Commission recommended approval of the proposed Irvington BART Station Area Plan, which includes the commercial area in the Irvington Town Center along Washington and Fremont Boulevards, and the residential area along Osgood Road. The plan will now go to the City Council on July 16 for a final review and decision.

The Planning Commission's consideration of the plan had been carried forward from a previous meeting in order to give time to review one of the commissioner's request for several changes. City staff reviewed the changes and presented their findings, which the planning commission accepted as part of their recommendation. The vote was 5 ayes, 1 nay, with 1 seat vacant.

So What's The Plan?

The plan incorporates the same General Plan land use designations, the same zoning requirements, and the same basic layout that have been in effect since 2011. The question is whether the plan is the best way to develop the area, and whether it would be able to deal with the problems that could arise?

The BART station would be at the southwest corner of Washington and Osgood with access for cars, busses, and pedestrians. Only instead of parking capacity for about 900 private vehicles, BART has decided they would provide parking for only about 300 vehicles. According to city staff, this reduction was intended to discourage I-680 commuters from using the station. To prevent commuters from parking on the nearby streets, the city would require local residents to obtain permits to park in front of their houses.

West of the station, the plan would allow development of buildings up to five- or six-stories tall on both sides of Washington and along Fremont north to Chapel. Under the current standards, some of the buildings could have commercial spaces on the ground floors and residential units on the upper floors. Other buildings could have office spaces on all floors or residential units on all floors. New townhouse developments would not be allowed. City staff emphasized that developers have not submitted any formal plans for this area yet.

South of the station along a half-mile stretch of Osgood, the plan would require high-rise, urban-density housing on both sides of the street. New townhouses or lower-density housing would not be allowed. The plan for this area also defines details of architecture and site planning to make the individual developments blend with each other and to minimize the number of driveways. This would be a Transit Oriented Development housing area, and it is expected that many people who live there would walk or take a bus to use BART.

Residents Speak Out

During the Planning Commission meeting, several residents voiced their feelings about the Irvington BART Station Area Plan -- some were for it, and others against.

Traffic was one of the biggest concerns. Despite the plan's conclusion that the estimated 3,700 daily BART riders using the station would not cause a significant increase in traffic, many residents disagreed. Others expressed concerns that the proposed resident parking permit program would

place an unfair burden on the local residents and would not be effective in preventing commuter parking on the streets surrounding the station.

The impact on the Irvington Town Center was another concern. The plan would encourage construction of 65-foot-high buildings out to the edge of the sidewalks, but residents said that was too tall and the new buildings would dwarf the Leal Theatre, Odd Fellows Hall, and other historic landmarks in the Five Corners area.

And some residents went so far as to say the Irvington BART station wasn't needed and shouldn't be built. They pointed out that funding for the station is still \$50-60 million short, and the Warm Springs station is just a 5-minute bus ride away.

All residents are encouraged to email their comments about the Irvington BART Station Area Plan to City Staff Planner Wayland Li at wli@fremont.gov or attend the City Council meeting at 3300 Capitol Avenue on Tuesday, July 16 at 7 p.m.