

Shape Our Fremont

Fremont to Consider Plan for Area Near Future Irvington BART Station

Within the next few weeks, the Planning Commission and City Council will consider the Irvington BART Station Area Plan, which encompasses portions of Osgood Road to the south and Washington Boulevard to the west. This plan would set standards for residential and commercial buildings throughout the area that could change the face of Irvington.

Block by Block

The Irvington BART station is planned to be built at the southwest corner of Washington Boulevard and Osgood/Driscoll Roads, with bus and pedestrian access on the east side and vehicle parking on the west side. The area east of Osgood near the Gallegos Winery ruins would be a city park.

South of the station for a half mile along Osgood, both sides of the street would be lined with six-story apartments, condos, and affordable housing units. A total of about 600 new units have been approved or are pending review in this area. Many other properties are awaiting possible residential development.

West of the station along Washington, the buildings would be four- or five-story commercial, residential, or a combination of the two known as mixed-use. Parking would be underground or in parking structures. The Leal Theater and other potentially historic buildings would be preserved, but they could be surrounded by newer, taller buildings.

Other areas within a half-mile radius of the Irvington BART station would remain largely untouched by the plan, although they would still be within a Transit Oriented Development Overlay and could potentially be subject to high-density housing development.

Plans and Problems

Every plan has its problems, and this one seems to be no exception. At community outreach meetings, residents voiced their concerns about the plan's impacts on traffic, parking, and community character, among others.

Traffic is a major concern for residents living in Irvington and as far away as Mission San Jose. They point out that many Irvington BART riders would drive from outside Fremont on Interstate 680 and take the Mission or Washington exits to reach the station, thus increasing traffic on already-congested surface streets throughout the area.

Once drivers reach the Irvington station, there would be another problem. To try to limit the number of people who drive in personal vehicles, the plan provides only about 320 parking spaces at the station -- even though there would be an estimated 3,700 daily riders. Residents say that is unrealistic and the lack of parking would simply force drivers to park elsewhere.

To prevent BART riders from parking on nearby streets, the plan also calls for a resident parking permit program, which would require residents in nearby neighborhoods to display a parking permit on their vehicles in order to park on the street. Residents say they are skeptical the permit plan would work and feel it would just pit the City against the neighbors in a lose-lose situation.

Finally, many residents feel the basic community character of the Irvington Town Center should be a commercial area, not a residential area. Although they applaud the plans for sidewalk eating area, walkways between the buildings, and other details to make the area more pedestrian friendly, they feel the proposed building heights and densities should be scaled down, and the Town Center should have much less residential.

What's Next?

During the Planning Commission hearing of the plan on May 23, one of the commissioners submitted a list of proposed changes. In order to let the other commissioners and staff evaluate these changes, the item was tabled until a future meeting.

This item is now scheduled to be heard by the Planning Commission on Thursday, June 27. It is then tentatively scheduled to go to the City Council on Tuesday, July 16.

One of the biggest issues facing the City Council is the mixed-use standard, which currently allows commercial buildings up to 65 feet tall, with a small amount of commercial space and a very large percentage of residential. Many of the buildings proposed for the Irvington Town Center would be mixed-use. Some residents think the standard should be re-evaluated before the Council votes on the Irvington BART Station Area Plan. Others feel the BART station itself should be dropped because it is not needed and is not worth the problems it would cause.

All Fremont residents are encouraged to speak at the Planning Commission and City Council meetings and also send emails to the assigned City Staff Planner Wayland Li at wli@fremont.gov