

Shape Our Fremont

Latest Housing News

January has been a busy month for housing developments. Here are some updates on old and new developments across the city.

GPA Recommendations

During the Planning Commission meeting on January 23, the commissioners considered two General Plan Amendment (GPA) Screening Requests to change General Plan Land Use Designations. After hearing comments from all parties, they recommended to deny authorization of both.

The Rex Homes request wanted the city to consider changing the vacant lot at 34600 Niles Boulevard in Niles from Private Open Space to Low Density Residential in order to build 5 single-family houses. This request met opposition from local residents and the commission who pointed out the property had been designated as private open space as part of a planned housing development in 1971. Several people said they felt the open space complimented the California Nursery park plans across the street. Several others were concerned that the adjacent intersection of Niles Boulevard and Nursery Avenue was one of the most congested in Fremont, and building individual homes with individual driveways on the corner would add to the congestion and cause an unsafe situation. The commission unanimously recommended the request not be authorized to move forward with a formal proposal.

The Ellsworth Residential request asked the city to consider changing the two vacant lots at 43401 and 43431 Ellsworth Street in Mission San Jose from Town Center Commercial to Low-Medium Density Residential in order to build 16 detached multi-family houses. This request also generated a great deal of discussion -- both for and against. Opponents argued the two properties had been designated commercial for decades, and that a study of commercial opportunities in the Town Center recommended both sides of Ellsworth from Washington to Anza be developed as a primary commercial area with an emphasis on restaurants and retail businesses. The developer countered that he felt the area would not sustain commercial and offered to contribute \$1 million to revitalize existing businesses as an incentive. By a vote of 3 to 2, the commission recommended the request not be authorized to move forward.

Residents may still send their comments on either of these requests to City Staff Planner Hang Zhou at hzhou@fremont.gov

Both requests will be heard by the City Council on Tuesday, February 18 at 7 p.m.

What Happened to...?

Sometimes housing development proposals get approved, and then seem to drop out of sight. Here are a few updates on previously approved projects in Centerville as examples.

The City Center Apartments proposal to build 60 affordable housing apartments across from Washington High School is expected to be completed in 2021. The Thornton Avenue Mixed Use proposal for 54 market-rate condominiums and 7,390 square feet of commercial space near Dale's Hardware has not started construction yet. And the developer of The Cottages proposal for 7 single-family houses and 30 duet units on Blacow Road near the railroad tracks recently asked for a time extension.

Finally, the SummerHill Apartment Communities' preliminary proposal to develop the Centerville location of the Century House and the former Minerva's Restaurant has not been submitted as a formal application. At this time, it is the city's understanding that SummerHill is no longer interested in pursuing development of the site.

Housing Plans Elsewhere

Fremont is not the only city having to deal with housing problems. For example, at San Jose State University the lack of affordable housing affects both students and faculty. Students often have to drive long distances from home, and a significant number of them are essentially homeless -- sleeping on friends' sofas or in hidden corners of the campus. Some prospective faculty have been reluctant to take positions at the university because of the high cost of housing in the area. To address this problem, the university recently announced plans to tear down a little-used state-owned building near campus and build 800 to 1,200 apartments for faculty, staff, and students. Most units would be rented for below market value.

And overseas in Vienna, Austria, the city controls about half of the housing. Part is owned by the city and rented at levels that are affordable for both middle-income and low-income residents. An equal part is owned and managed by private nonprofit developers under the direction of the city. These developers include housing cooperatives and labor unions that have an interest in providing housing for people at all levels of income.

—

For the latest updates to housing news, visit www.ShapeOurFremont.com