

Shape Our Fremont

High-Rise Housing at the Hub?

The City of Fremont's plan to develop an "urban neighborhood" in and around The Hub shopping center is starting to take shape. If you didn't know about it, you are not alone.

Currently there are three proposals to build multi-story buildings in the area -- two of them at The Hub itself. It's part of the City's intent to urbanize the entire City Center, and more high-rise proposals are sure to follow.

City Center Plans

The City Center is part of the Fremont General Plan. It is generally defined as being the area surrounding the new Downtown District and is bounded by Mowry Avenue on the north, the Fremont BART station on the east, Argonaut Way on the west, and an irregular line running between Stevenson Boulevard and Walnut Avenue on the south. The Downtown is separate from the City Center and has its own development plans.

The portion of the City Center that contains The Hub shopping center is designated as an Urban Neighborhood Zone. According to the Fremont Municipal Code, the function of this area is "... to support the downtown and employment core areas with a wide variety of housing opportunities, neighborhood services, office, neighborhood retail, and regional retail ...".

Buildings in the Urban Neighborhood can be residential, or they can be mixed-use with commercial on the ground floor and residential units above. The buildings can be two- to six-stories high, with a maximum height of 75 feet. Parking for residential units may be located up to 600 feet away from the building site, and parking for non-residential commercial units may be located up to 1,250 feet away from the building site.

Current Proposals

Three development proposals for The Hub area are going through a Preliminary Review Procedure (PRP) with the Fremont Planning Department to identify potential problems early in the process. This is a good time for residents to express their thoughts and feelings on any and all of them.

Fremont Hub Mixed-Use Buildings (PRP2018-00004). This proposal will demolish several existing business buildings at The Hub and replace them with a six-story building that includes a drug store and other retail space on the ground floor, 303 apartment units on the upper five floors, and two levels of underground parking. Email questions and concerns to Fremont Staff Planner Joel Pullen at jpullen@fremont.gov

The Argonaut (PLN2016-00427). Another developer has proposed to build a six-story building with 58 condominiums on the corner of The Hub at Mowry Avenue and Argonaut Way. Parking will be on three levels -- one at ground level, and the other two below ground. The existing Union 76 gas station will be demolished. Email questions and concerns to Fremont Staff Planner Steve Kowalski at skowalski@fremont.gov

Bell Street Housing (PRP2018-00002). This Affordable Housing project is located opposite The Hub on the north side of Mowry Avenue. It is just outside the City Center boundaries, but it will contribute to the impacts on traffic, schools, and water in the area. The existing Islander Motel will be converted

to 65 studio apartments with kitchenettes, and a four-story building with a total of 53 one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments will be constructed on two vacant lots behind the motel. All parking will be on site. Email questions and concerns to Fremont Staff Planner David Wage at dwage@fremont.gov

These projects will add a total of 480 housing units in an area that is primarily commercial, and the General Plan allows many, many more.

Time for a Time Out?

Before we consider any of these projects, we need to ask some tough questions. Does the intent to urbanize the entire City Center area go too far? Are the proposed buildings too tall? Will the presence of housing and the lack of convenient parking harm the retail businesses? Can our streets and schools and parks and water supplies really handle such a large influx of people in a small area? And where are all the jobs in the Downtown and City Center? Right now the only projects that have been approved in those areas are a lot of housing with only a minimum amount of commercial space.

These are all good questions, but they won't get answered unless residents ask them.

Maybe the best approach is to call a time out for all developments in the City Center area until we can work out some answers. The concept of "build it first and deal with the problems later" is a poor one, and we shouldn't follow it. That's not how Fremont should grow.

To learn more about all proposed housing developments and related issues in Fremont, go to [**www.ShapeOurFremont.com**](http://www.ShapeOurFremont.com)