

**2. HAMILTON SQUARE, LLC (ED)
P2013-040; DESIGN REVIEW
APN 157-980-05; MAIN GATE AND “C” STREETS**

Conduct a Design Review Hearing to discuss the site plan for a proposal to use the former gas station site at Main Gate and “C” Streets for residential use.

CEQA Compliance: Pursuant to Section 15063, an environmental review will be prepared based upon the recommendation by the Design Review Commission on the site plan and conceptual architecture. This review will be brought to the Planning Commission for a recommendation and City Council for action.

Applicant attendees: Rob Davidson, Thompson Development, Inc., John Miki and Melia West, Opticos, and Carla Violet, Urban Planning Partners.

Planner Dunn gave a staff presentation summarizing the history of the proposal. Rob Davidson provided a brief introduction and why Scheme D was being proposed. John Miki, of Opticos gave a presentation of the site plan, which included conceptual architecture and landscaping for the 31 unit townhome project.

John Miki indicated the following for Scheme D:

- More info provided in this site plan- privacy fence, low wall and dooryards
- Looked at elevation and made modifications
 - Included side elevation and massing steps down along alley
 - 3-story elevation concept- 2 story massing
 - Elevation specific to Scheme A (C Street elevation)
 - Low wall close to the street
 - Space for outdoor furniture
 - Highlighting entrance to Hamilton Square from C Street more
 - These elevations will be carried forward in all Schemes
- Reduce connections to Main Gate
- Maintain frontage along Main Gate
- Reduce garages facing Main Gate

Scheme A - reviewed at prior DRC meeting

Scheme B - carriage house to screen garages

- Reduced park space
- Reduced connections
- Unit count increased
- Maintained frontage along Main Gate

Scheme C - What if new street was removed?

**March 19, 2014
DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION
MINUTES EXCERPT**

- Moved buildings around- reconfigured to reduce access points
- The island unit sticks out
- Park isn't visible from either street
- Garages facing 2 sides of park
- Reduced connections to Main Gate
- Maintained frontage along Main Gate
- Mix of 2 and 3 story units along C Street
- Increased park area

Scheme D - Good compromise

- Reducing access points
- Park is still visible along Main Gate
- 2 story building on the corner
- No garages fronting onto park space
- Weakness
- C street frontage mostly 3 stories
- Summary table for easy reference

Rob Davidson - Conclusion:

- Decided this development will be a LEED certified project- still need to establish what levels
- One of first TOD's on the SMART line
- Rare site to allow Novato to put housing near the station
- Site is constrained, and has been studied extensively
- Opportunity to repurpose blighted gas station

Commissioner MacLeamy: How will you handle fire dept access?

Rob Davidson: In talking to Batallion Chief Bill Tyler, emergency access to the west side of 3-story units near mail pavilion would have to shrink down. Access would only be provided in an emergency. We would have to remove tree so that the fire dept could drive into park.

Commissioner MacLeamy: Have you talked with park service?

Rob Davidson: During CEQA process there would be a more thorough review for park service. Clarified that 3-story units have 2 story massing.

Planner Dunn confirmed final details for architecture will come back to DRC. It would be helpful for the DRC to approve Spanish style/theme now.

Commissioner Barber: So, the 2-story units would come down to 1-story and the 3-story units would come down to 2-stories, but the majority of the development is 3-stories.

Commissioner Telfer: The elevations show much more complex details, but site plan is much more blocky. Are you assuming block forms on site plan will fit roofs? Or will roof stick out more?

John Miki: On 3-story buildings, there are protrusions that will fit into footprint of site plans. However 2nd story balconies will protrude more than what is shown on the site plan.

Commissioner Telfer: You are sure the details will fit onto site plan?

John Miki: Yes

Public Comments

Joan Good- I live in Hamilton and attended previous Forum. A number of residents expressed concern about 3-stories and felt it was too tall. The Hamilton Plan does not allow 3-stories so some kind of variance or special approval would be required. This site plan is an improvement from a few months ago. But residents will have to live with this. Increased traffic and huge footprint on a small lot.

Planner Dunn: There is a height limit of 30 feet and 2-story maximum in Hamilton Reuse Plan. The developer must ask for amendment in Hamilton Reuse Plan to exceed. The Council would have to grant that amendment.

Elvera Berson - I live in Hamilton. The site of this plan is especially critical because it is at the entrance of Main Gate at Hamilton. Prices of homes are going up which is good for taxpayers of Novato (paying home prices). Glad to see something is being planned for that area because it is absolutely awful. The apartment project is the only thing that is being considered. Lanham Village is right across from this site plan and is beautiful. This site needs to add to the entrance. As you think of Main Gate and the historical value of that entrance. Please do not accept three stories.

Commission Comments:

Commissioner Farrell: I commend the applicant- many meetings and opposing design objectives here. One objective- let's face inward and enjoy a nice green area. Second objective- let's face out. The applicant has done a good job at studying different objectives. Have to agree that Scheme D does a really good job at getting a nice green area that occupants of development can use and keeps it open to Main Gate so people know about it.

I like placement of Mail Pavilion - you get peekaboo effect. I know you have to get a certain number of units in here to work. The alley way of double backed row of buildings is not ideal, but standing in center of green and seeing all front doors and not garages is going to be great place for people to interact and kids to play.

Great job of finding a solution. 3-story units is ideal for being close to the SMART rail station. I'd much rather have 3 stories on C Street and have large park there. It's going to be fabulous. I really like how you have parking on alleys. Will only see park space and outdoor areas. I don't like seeing any

garages facing the park as shown in other Schemes.

Commissioner Telfer: I concur with great advantages of Scheme D site plan. The other thing that will pull this off is handsome architectural work that is underway. Interesting buildings to fit this form.

Commissioner MacLeamy: I believe Scheme D is the best out of all 4 schemes, but I believe there is yet a better way to do this. Has to do with conundrum of eyes on the street. If I have my choice, I would not have a front door on C Street or Main Gate. Main Gate is smallish boulevard with quite a bit of traffic. I wouldn't want to be out on my front stoop. Beauty of Scheme D is the new street shown in Scheme C and B, is replaced by network of alleys. So impact of streetscape is reduced. Not a good idea to have units facing Main Gate Road. Units that face Main Gate (2 stories) and C Street do not have same access to green space. I do like the view into green space and enjoy the feeling, but I think we have disenfranchised units facing Main Gate and C Street based on idea that having house fronts facing streets is a good thing no matter what. It is a 2-lane boulevard and I find it's objectionable. This Scheme D has 31 units and 3 entrances to streets and that is a lot of ingress/egress points. I live in a place with 600 homes and there are only 2 points of access. This is a scale question. Are 31 units enough to have all these ingress/egress points? I won't be able to support this site plan the way it is. We could have two buildings facing outwards, face inward.

Commissioner Radovanocich: The things I objected to last time is units facing Main Gate and the internal alley which will be dark except for maybe an hour during the summer. It will feel like a tunnel. I appreciate how hard you all have worked. I'm really torn about this. I appreciate 2-stories on corner that is absolutely critical. Not sure how I feel about it on C Street. If I was a visitor coming here there is no entry point for. There is for pedestrians but not for visitors driving. I live in a unit that is 4 stories with an alley and I know what it feels like. We are fortunate to get good sun. I understand the conundrum. There is not the ah-ha moment yet.

Commissioner Barber: The architect could get one access point, but he'd have to stack them. We will get a lesser product if we reduce to one egress/ingress point. We talked about how that one central 2-story would be isolated in Scheme C. Now there are two buildings that are isolated in Scheme D. This is not a valid point. The alley way I've complained about from the beginning. Now buildings are closer to C Street. This area has become much more compressed now. I actually like Plan C quite a bit. I think garages could be solved architecturally that are facing the park. The only advantage to Scheme D is huge lawn area. Mail Pavilion is more central and if made larger, perfect gathering point for community to sit and watch their kids. I like Scheme C with 2 and 3-story buildings. Only drawback is garages which could be handled with screening. Actually not as bothered by front steps looking out. More concerned with alley way and tight space. No park space access for units on C Street. This plan has gone back to issues I didn't like from original plans. Would be nice to have real sketch of garage elevation to see if it really is an issue or not.

John Miki: We did bring photos of similar alleys. To meet Novato fire standards need 28-30 feet from garage door to garage door.

Rob Davdison: There is a philosophical issue here we won't be able to solve. Ring road was drawn up but we feel Scheme D is a better design. We have done similar developments in Petaluma and there aren't people hanging out in their front stoops. It's about aesthetics and making it feel like a community. It's just a place to put flowers, etc. Not sure how to solve this problem. The alley is a

functional area not a beautiful area. It is a service area. People will still be going to the mail pavilion regardless of what unit they are living in. We are not proposing the internal ring road, but we did study it. There's an issue about recommending but not supporting. The units facing the street provide activity on the street. I can see the mail pavilion as a place where people will congregate. I would like recommendations from the Design Review Commission to know how to move forward.

Commissioner Telfer: The concept of putting a wall around a piece of land and having a population to live within walls with tops peeking out and showing tops of homes is not a desirable feature. I'm not sure how anyone could compare this project to Pacheco Valle. Completely different community. Dominant look of single-family homes in America has garage in front with a front yard and backyard in back with privacy. They don't have access to large open space. Some people sit out front and some people don't. Overall this is a different kind of project that we need. It has a lot of great features. There will be different places on the site for different people. I think Scheme D makes a lot of sense and fits within the community. Will have school nearby with kids and trees all over. This is a strong project with a lot of good features. Site plan should be approved and I have confidence in the skill of the architect.

Commissioner Farrell: While I do see it is a nice sense of community to have units facing the street, there is discussion about how people won't be able to grill on their front yard. There will be the same issue for people facing park. They won't be grilling on front stoops necessarily. Obviously there is more traffic and noise for units facing street. I think we are giving applicant two opposing views about how to look onto the street. Scheme D does the best job of compromising between both views. There are units facing the street and others facing park. Will everyone be able to face lawn, no. But it does its best to address both issues. Let's give guidance rather than going back and forth.

Commissioner Barber: Main issue is garage facing street or not. Scheme C does everything except for garage facing square which could be screened. But Scheme D brings a lot more issues back. I could go both ways with units facing street or not. Kind of at a stall here.

Rob Davidson: I'd like to comment on C- this is a viable alternative. There are some positives about Scheme C- there are 2 stories along Main Gate and C Street. If this Committee feels this is a viable option, we could advance. Scheme C is second choice and Scheme D is first choice.

Commissioner Radovanovich: I object most to alley ways. It introduces a very urban feel to a suburban area. We can't have it all ways. Maybe C works. I could probably get over fronting of units on Main Gate. Scheme C feels more equal. Now all units have access to park.

Commissioner MacLeamy: The difficulty with Scheme D is a double loaded alley can be an oppressive place. Only during midday would there be light. Beauty of ring road is it a single loaded alley. North and the West of the site have single loaded alleys, room for landscaping, and privacy fence separating school property. Alleys can be elegant places if planned properly. Scheme D- has single loaded alleys except for on C Street. With Scheme C, 3 units facing street is less than ideal but at least there are single loaded alleys. Issue with Scheme C, instead of green facing all units, there are garage units. Going to see them on C Street and Main Gate. I think there is a way to do this with good design. There is an internal ring road and I am imagining a wall. Even with Scheme D, front doors facing Main Gate road, you need to have at least a low wall to provide some separation to front doors facing street. You could easily have a wall that obscures garage fronts and provide a peekaboo into green space with

a little work. Those front doors facing the street are aesthetic tokens to put a good face on things. If you are in Northerly or Westerly units facing park, there is chance for private patio space, separated by low wall or hedge. They are away from street and can watch kids more easily. That is community. There are other places more appropriate for activating street. Hamilton developments are single family streets with loops and we see garage fronts which is what we don't want. Half of Scheme D gets away from that and gives humanity back to housing and allow people to play. It relegates cars to alley way. We've twisted this scheme by trying to balance inward and outward facing units. I won't support Scheme C and D. If you have a wall you can still see over, can see tops of garages. The elevations show garages as white and they stand out. A nicely landscaped wall can obscure ground clutter. Could integrate walls in certain places with gaps (through alley system).

What are options we have for tonight? We can approve, object, or continue. If we disapprove, Developer could appeal to PC. They would just go forward with negative approval.

I don't want this green to be compromised by garages. I do agree alleys aren't the best, but trying to split hairs by having units facing streets and large green. I'd like to see the site with a C like solution. I don't like dinky units in middle of development or garages facing inward. I agree if that's not going to move forward. Either applicant moves forward without a positive recommendation or can look at a ring road option.

Commissioner Barber: If you have a ring road, the park size will be reduced. Scheme D is not going to fly with enough people. Can we go with Scheme C and apply conditions and suggestions? Or really look at the ring road? That will be whole another plan. Could you make 2-story units on C Street? Can we move forward with Scheme C? Commissioners Telfer and MacLeamy - no.

Commissioner Farrell: Yes, but let's have all units face the green.

Commissioner Barber: But then that would reduce green space.

Commissioner Farrell: That's why I'm in favor of Scheme D - can see both.

Planner Dunn: If the Commission is going forward with Scheme C except with walls, this is something staff cannot support.

Commissioner Farrell: Joe: Make a motion to approve Scheme D. Commissioner Telfer seconded. Ayes: Farrell, Telfer. Noes: Barber, MacLeamy, Radovanovich. Motion fails.

Commissioner Barber: Make a motion to approve Scheme C (with conditions). Failed for lack of a second.

Commissioner Radovanovich: Every development in Hamilton has a wall around it. This is not a new concept. Let's see ring road concept.

John Miki: Low wall and privacy fence could soften edge. Everything facing park is 3 stories. Exterior is 2 stories. Park space is significantly smaller in this scenario.

Commissioner MacLeamy: This looks like Scheme A. This isn't a ring road. Still units outside of the

road. On Scheme D, I like the window into the green – this is a wonderful thing to do. I'd work to keep that. I like that the internal circulation is an alleyway. Architecture is fine. It's this issue with putting roads in middle of site and need roads to meet them. There is way to get it all. Still have eyes on the street in this scheme. Unless you change strategy with tuck under parking. Nothing will be a compromise because of outward facing units.

Commissioner Farrell: Only way to accomplish what you're looking for is U shape facing east onto C Street.

Commissioner Barber: Make a motion to approve Scheme C – that's going nowhere. Scheme C with refinements. Leaving garages as is with minor conditions. Failed for lack of a second.

Commissioner Farrell: Don't get any sense of green from Main Gate and garages are the 2 issues.

Commissioner Barber: No consensus on Scheme C. Do we want to see a refinement of ring road concept?

John Miki: We looked at an open U, but you lose 6 units because the road goes around. We could make units on C Street 2-stories on Scheme D.

Commissioner Barber- Not endorsing Scheme C & D. Not sure what objectives to give to developer except come back with another proposal. We don't have a clear winner yet. Difference of opinion makes it hard to know what direction. Come back with a refined ring road concept. Some potential on Scheme C.

Commissioner Farrell: Would like to see further development of ring road. But too many units to do this.

Rob Davidson: I need clarity on the philosophy for this – units facing inward or outward. I'd like to ask to continue this discuss, and will explore a combination of a ring road and Scheme D. We'll work on Scheme D and making alleys less narrow. Access points need to be at least 100 feet back from the intersection of Main Gate and "C" Streets. I don't want corner area without anything on it.

Commissioner Radovanovich: My first preference is a ring road. With improvements- Scheme C could be supported. Commissioner Barber feels same way about the alleyway.