

Outpouring of support for Main Street proposal

Mixed-use project expected to revitalize historic stretch in Redwood City

By Zachary Clark Daily Journal staff Mar 22, 2018 Updated Mar 22, 2018



One might guess a development requesting a variety of exceptions and general and precise plan amendments would be met with controversy, but the mixed-use project proposed for 851 Main St. in Redwood City appears to have the enthusiastic support of many.

The Acclaim Companies' 28,068-square-foot development was approved unanimously by the Planning Commission at a Tuesday meeting after nearly 15 speakers celebrated its ability to revitalize Main Street.

The four-story development — 59 feet at its highest — will merge four existing parcels into one, and bring 78,832 square feet of office space, 6,900 square feet of ground-level retail, 246 underground public parking spaces and 50 bike parking spots, according to a staff report. Three of the four buildings currently on the site will be demolished, but the historic landmark building will be preserved and rehabilitated. A one-story addition will be constructed around and above the historic building, and the lobby of the adjacent building will be home to a public art gallery, according to the report.

The office space will include elevated outdoor areas, and the building will be set back 40 and 80 feet from the street as it rises two stories and above. Trees will also be planted along street.

“I think this is a phenomenal project,” said Planning Commission Vice Chair Kevin Bondonno, who praised it for revitalizing both Main and Walnut streets, preserving the historic building and for providing various community benefits.

Those community benefits include a \$605,000 payment into the affordable housing fund, \$85,000 for the art gallery, \$25,000 to the Redwood City Parks and Arts Foundation, another \$25,000 to local public schools and \$5,000 to the Sheriff’s Athletic League.

During the public comment period, many speakers living in the nearby Redwood City Commons apartment building said the new, well-lit building would make Walnut Street safer and cleaner.

Retailers praised the project for bringing foot traffic and “much-needed” public parking to the area. The project’s parking garage would be open nights, weekends and holidays and would include valet service.

Ralph Garcia, who owns the nearby Ralph’s Vacuum and Sewing Center, said he also likes that the project’s office space would not be equipped with a kitchen, so workers will instead patronize local eateries for lunch.

The project’s widespread support can be credited, in part, to at least three workshops hosted by the project applicant, Redwood City resident Gary Johnson. He said his firm’s decision to add an art gallery, expand the retail space and rehabilitate the historic building, among other things, were influenced by community input.

“This is the type of outreach that needs to be done on all projects because it’s through listening that you hear the community’s needs,” said Commissioner Connie Guerrero.

In approving the project, the Planning Commission also approved amendments to the city’s general and downtown precise plans because the project exceeds the office space cap by 74,667 square feet. Principal Planner Karen Vaughn also clarified that the exception is only for this project and couldn’t be transferred to another downtown site.

Some concerns were also raised about traffic impacts, but Ray Pendro, senior project manager at MIG, said the project will actually bring fewer daily car trips than the area sees now because there is less turnover in car trips to and from offices than the existing restaurants. But there will be some traffic impacts in the area based on office hours, he added.

The city will be accepting comments on the draft of the project’s supplemental environmental impact report through April 13. The final report and project entitlements will be considered by the City Council at a future meeting, according to the staff report.

“I’m really supportive of this project,” Commissioner Shawn White said. “I grew up three blocks away from this property, and I know firsthand just how in dire need this area is of revitalization.”

In other business, the commission voted to allow cannabis delivery operations and indoor nurseries growing immature starter plants to set up shop in the city’s industrial zones, but with no storefront retail component. Those businesses would also have to be 1,000 feet away from schools, child care centers, public parks and libraries. Several speakers who own marijuana businesses said the current zoning requirements are restrictive and leave them with few vacant properties on which to open their business. The commission’s recommendation will be heard by the City Council April 9, according to a staff report.

zachary@smdailyjournal.com

(650) 344-5200 ex. 102