Planning Commission

staff report  July 10, 2018

Study Session Item #1  PLN 18-0198 STRATUS DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS HOTEL DEVELOPMENT
3131 & 3195 NORTH MAIN STREET & 1531 OAK PARK BOULEVARD

Project Planner:  Troy Fujimoto, (925) 671-5224, tfujimoto@pleasanthillca.org

Applicant:  Stratus Development Partners Hotel Development

Property Owner:  Pomfret Estates Inc., 401 Grand Avenue #360 Oakland, CA 94610

I.  INTRODUCTION

A.  Project Description

Study session to consider a preliminary proposal for a four story Cambria hotel on a 2.49 acre site; the building would be up to 50 feet in height, with approximately 155 rooms, 135 surface parking spaces, located at the southwest corner of North Main Street and Oak Park Boulevard (Assessor Parcel Numbers 170-092-050, 054, 055, 057 & 058). The proposal also includes an outdoor swimming pool and terrace area on the west side of the hotel building.

B.  Background

The site is comprised of several existing parcels located at the southern gateway to Pleasant Hill, with direct frontage on North Main Street, facing toward the 680 Freeway. It is located within the Commercial and Retail General Plan land use designation and within the Retail Business (RB) zone district. The site is currently developed with a Black Angus Restaurant (recently reopened after a fire in the building), parking lot, vacant space and an approximately 2,500 square foot building. Adjacent uses include a mortuary to the south (Walnut Creek); two single family residences to the west (Walnut Creek); Oak Park Boulevard to the North and North Main Street to the west. Various development proposals have been considered for the site over the years including, most recently, a pre-application review for residential development and prior to that, a development application for an In & Out Burger Restaurant (withdrawn by the applicant prior to completion of the review process). The proposed hotel is a permitted use in the Retail Business (RB) zone district and will be reviewed through the Planned Unit Development process.

In April of this year, the Planning Commission received an initial presentation by the applicant introducing the development team and presenting conceptual plans for the
proposed development. The applicant subsequently attended a study session with the Architectural Review Commission to receive preliminary input on the proposal and, in May, conducted a community meeting at the Pleasant Hill public library to encourage additional feedback from the public. Issues raised by the public in these meetings include concerns regarding the proposed height/number of stories, privacy for adjacent residential uses, traffic, parking, noise, lighting, construction related impacts, preservation of the existing large oak tree, drainage and area flooding concerns. As a result of the input received to-date, revisions were made to the project description and plans for further input at this evening’s study session.

II. ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION ITEMS

Since the applicant’s initial presentation to the Planning Commission in April 2018, the project plans have been further refined with a more detailed site plan, floor plan, architectural elevations and a preliminary landscape and drainage plan. The key considerations addressed in the revised plans are summarized below:

A. Massing/Design

Key Points:

- The site is at a key gateway location at the southern border with Walnut Creek and fronts directly on the North Main Street corridor and the 680 Freeway. Consequently, a prominent building with a signature design is appropriate for this highly visible location. The hotel is proposed to be four stories throughout with the primary entrance located on the eastern side of the building with a porte-cochere vehicle entry onto North Main Street. Various design features and materials are proposed to provide architectural interest with balconies, projections, roof peaks and valleys throughout the building.

- The building would be located on the eastern edge of the site, furthest away from residential uses and would provide a buffer from freeway noise/activity from the east that is currently affecting the existing residents adjacent to the site.

- The four story configuration allows for a smaller building footprint which provides for greater space on the site to accommodate parking and landscaping to further buffer the site from adjacent uses.

Staff concurs that the four story configuration would provide for the most flexibility in designing the parking lot, landscaping and drainage improvements for this site. The four story configuration would also allow the building to take up less space along the North Main Street frontage, maintaining a substantial open area in the southern portion of the site for parking and landscaping and to maintain a view corridor through the site.
Finally, the four story configuration would allow the building mass to remain north of the existing residence located adjacent to the southwest corner of the site and also would provide a substantial setback between the hotel and the existing mortuary along the south property line.

The Architectural Review Commission provided preliminary comments during its initial study session suggesting the applicant consider available design measures to address the neighbors’ privacy concerns. The applicant will explore potential measures further with the Architectural Review Commission during the design review process.

B. Site Layout

Key Points:

- The general configuration of the building remains as initially presented. The hotel would be located towards the northeast corner of the site to be as far away from the residential uses to the west and the mortuary to the south as possible.

- The parking lot and landscaping would be located closest to the residential uses to the west. Enhanced landscaping would be incorporated along the western edge of the property line to provide additional buffering and screening of the project site.

- The existing large oak tree adjacent to the west property line is intended to be preserved.

- The trash enclosure would be located away from adjacent residences (next to an existing commercial use in the northwest area of the site).

- The outdoor pool/terrace area would be located on the west side of the hotel building and would be surrounded by a solid wall with landscaping.

C. Access

Key Points:

- Access to the property would be from the north, from Oak Park Boulevard, and to the east from North Main Street. The proposed layout would allow access to the site when arriving from either direction of North Main Street and would allow exiting to either direction onto North Main Street without requiring “U-Turns.”

- A left turn pocket in the median on North Main Street is also under consideration to provide for an additional means of ingress to the site.
Staff will be working with the project engineer to further refine the proposed entry onto North Main Street to provide for increased landscaping and improved pedestrian access (see Engineering Division comments below).

D. Landscaping & Lighting

Key Points:

- The revised plans show additional landscaping throughout the site, particularly in areas that would provide buffering for adjacent residential uses. Landscape buffers adjacent to the residence to the west would range from approximately 8 feet to 22 feet in width.

- A solid wall is proposed along the perimeter of the outdoor pool terrace area to provide additional buffering and screening.

- The project would also replace all of the existing parking lot lighting on the site with new light fixtures that comply with City standards. The applicant has indicated the light fixtures would be approximately 12 feet in height.

- The existing solid perimeter wall along the west property line is currently proposed to remain but could be enhanced by adding decorative landscape frames/screens, and with new landscaping adjacent to the wall.

Staff will be working with the project engineer to further refine the site landscape and drainage plan to enhance landscaping and increase tree planting in the interior area of the parking lot. The Architectural Review Commission will review design features of the proposed walls, parking lot improvements and landscaping and provide specific recommendations for consideration by the Planning Commission.

E. Key Development Standards

The project will be processed as a Planned Unit Development (PUD) concurrently with all required discretionary land use applications through the streamlined PUD review process; consequently, development standards will be tailored specifically for this particular site. At this time, the plans remain preliminary and the following key development standards are proposed:

- Height: Up to a maximum of 50 feet/four stories (plans indicate 49 feet to upper ridge line of main roof structure with the tower feature projecting above that height)
- Lot Coverage: 23%
- Landscape area: 20% approximately
- Parking Ratio: .87 per room
• Setbacks: Front: 12.7 to 42 ft. (excluding trellis & porte cochere feature); Rear: 57 to 116 feet; Corner Side: 15 to 34 ft.; Side: 150 ft. +/-.
• Floor Area Ratio: 0.91

Height/Stories: The proposed height and number of stories allow the project to achieve the targeted number of rooms necessary, according to the applicant, for the economic viability of the proposal on this site. In addition, the four story configuration would result in a smaller building footprint and shorter linear building frontage than if the building were designed to be three stories at the targeted number of rooms. The smaller building footprint is also favorable in terms of facilitating compliance with lot coverage, landscape, buffering and parking requirements by maximizing the amount of open area outside of the building footprint. The City’s Economic Development Manager has indicated that the targeted number of rooms can be accommodated given existing and projected future market demand in the area.

Setbacks/Buffering: The project proposes reducing the front setback to approximately 12.7 ft. up to 15.2 ft. for the portion of the building that would be located in the northeastern corner of the site. This configuration would increase the setback from the adjacent residence to the west and allow for additional landscape buffering on the west side of the site. As a result, the rear yard setback adjacent to the existing single family residence west of the proposed hotel building would range from a maximum of approximately 116 feet to a minimum of approximately 57 feet (the standard rear yard setback for the Retail Business zone district when a site adjoins a residential zone is 25 feet). The shadow analysis previously provided by the applicant also confirms that the building would not cast a shadow beyond the rear property line of the site. In addition, several large mature trees are located along the western side of the site, providing further screening for the existing residence.

Parking: With regard to parking, the project site is located within a designated Priority Development Area (PDA); consequently, parking standards may be reduced by 15% in consideration of the site’s proximity to public transportation options. The standard hotel parking requirement in Pleasant Hill is 1 parking space per room. The applicant is proposing a ratio of .87 parking spaces per room which would comply with the reduced parking allowable within a PDA. Due to proximity to Bart and availability of other transportation options, staff believes the reduced parking ratio would be appropriate. Note that the parking requirement for hotels in Walnut Creek is 0.9 per room and in Concord is 1.0 per room.

F. Operational Considerations

During the neighborhood meeting in May, residents in the area expressed concerns regarding potential noise from landscape maintenance activities, trash pick-up, deliveries and from outdoor activities in the pool and surrounding
outdoor terrace area. The applicant indicated that these issues would be addressed by requiring use of electric equipment for landscape maintenance; location of the trash enclosure away from the residential uses; scheduling deliveries to avoid early morning and late night hours; and providing a solid wall and additional landscaping around the outdoor pool/terrace area. The hours of outdoor use for the pool area would also be restricted as determined appropriate by the Commission. Finally, the applicant also noted that access into the building from the rear would be controlled and limited. In terms of the operations within the hotel, the food service would be limited to breakfast only and a limited bar area. A full service restaurant open to the public is not proposed. Banquet facilities are also not proposed.

G. **Streetscape Considerations**

The east elevation of the hotel, facing toward North Main Street, includes a variety of windows, doors, a porte cochere, trellis feature and a variety of materials to provide for a visually appealing pedestrian oriented streetscape for the project. This building elevation includes balconies, recessed areas, and a tower element to provide horizontal and vertical articulation adding visual interest to the design. Existing above ground utilities along the street frontage will be required to be undergrounded where feasible. Additional landscaping in the median and along the public sidewalk fronting the site is also under consideration. As noted above, Staff will work with the Architectural Review Commission and the applicant to further refine and enhance these design elements during the course of the review process.

H. **Engineering Comments**

**Key Points:**

- Main entrance to the site from the North Main Street should be redesigned to accommodate a conventional type of driveway-cut
- The public sidewalk along North Main Street should follow the street alignment rather than having multiple switch backs
- New sidewalk on Oak Park Boulevard should be extended towards Pleasant Valley Drive
- The proposed bio-retention areas should relocated to provide better landscaping opportunities along North Main Street, Oak Park Boulevard and within the parking lot
- Site plan should include more detailed storm drain network connections
- The existing 8” SS line and easements seem to be within the proposed building footprint and may require relocation
- Engineering recommends a new left lane pocket and a median break on North Main Street to provide secondary access to the site from the north bound lanes
- Overhead utility lines along North Main Street will be required to be underground as part of the project where feasible
III. NEXT STEPS

The applicant will finalize their application submittal in the coming weeks to initiate formal City review. The City will then identify all the necessary land use entitlements needed for the project and also initiate the required environmental review for the project. The project will require consideration by the Architectural Review Commission, Planning Commission and ultimately final action by the City Council.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

Conduct the study session, receive input from all interested parties and identify any remaining concerns or questions regarding the proposal for further consideration by the applicant and staff.

V. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A  Applicant Information
Attachment B  Plans
Attachment C  Study Session Notice
Attachment D  Public Comments