



**CITY OF HERCULES
PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

MEETING DATE: August 5, 2019

TO: Chair Galieva and Members of the Planning Commission

SUBMITTED BY: Holly Smyth, AICP – Planning Director
Robert Reber, AICP – Adjunct Planner
Jerry Haag, Urban Planning Consultant (SP2)

SUBJECT: “Sycamore Crossing,” a proposal to relocate existing utilities and easements and construct approximately 29,511 square feet of commercial space, a 105-room hotel, and up to 120 residential dwellings on an approximately 12.88-acre site bound by San Pablo Avenue, Sycamore Avenue, and Tsushima Street, and consisting of:

- 1) **CEQA Initial Study & Determination (IS 17-02);**
- 2) **General Plan Amendment (GPA 17-02);**
- 3) **Zone Amendment (RZ 17-02);**
- 4) **Vesting Tentative Tract Map #9477;**
- 5) **Initial/Final Planned Development Plan (FPDP 17-02)
(superseding FPDP 14-02);**
- 6) **Design Review Permit (DRP 17-04), including Master Sign Program;**
- 7) **Conditional Use Permit (CUP 17-04); and**
- 8) **Minor Exception (ME 19-02) for parking reduction.**

APPLICANT: Sycamore Crossing Land Developers, LLC

LOCATION: South side of Sycamore Avenue and northwest side of San Pablo Avenue east of Tsushima Street.
Assessor Parcel Numbers (APN) 404-020-094-3 and 404-020-095-0

RECOMMENDED ACTION: That the Planning Commission open the continued public hearing, invite the applicant to make a presentation, receive a presentation from City staff, receive any testimony from the public and the Commission, ask applicant team or city staff to answer questions, close the public hearing if ready to take action, and consider adopting Resolutions 19-05, 19-06, and 19-07 recommending the City Council approve various components of the project.

- Draft Resolution #19-05 recommends that the City Council approve General Plan Amendment (GPA 17-02).

- Draft Resolution #19-06 recommends that the City Council adopt an Ordinance approving the Zone Amendment (RZ 17-02).
- Draft Resolution #19-07 recommends that the City Council approve:
 - Initial/Final Planned Development Plan #17-02;
 - Design Review Permit #17-04, including the Master Sign Program;
 - Conditional Use Permit #17-04;
 - Vesting Tentative Map #9477, including relocation of existing utility easements; and
 - Minor Exception #19-02 for minimum parking reduction.

The project is subject to exhibits contained therein, including:

- Conditions of Approval (Revised Exhibit A—see attachment below);
- Environmental Mitigations (Exhibit B);
- Complete project drawing set (Revised Exhibit C—see attachment below);
- Master Sign Program (Exhibit D); and
- Findings with Facts (Exhibit E).

2. BACKGROUND

The Planning Commission held a formal public hearing regarding the Sycamore Crossing project on July 15, 2019, which was after seven (7) informal workshops carried out on October 17 and December 4, 2017, and January 16, June 25, August 6, September 17, and December 3, 2018. The Planning Commission continued the July 15 public hearing to the its August 5, 2019, regular meeting to allow the applicant and staff time to research a number of issues raised during the hearing and revise the project as necessary.

The [July 15, 2019, staff report and its attachments](#) are included by reference as part of this staff report.

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND UPDATES

A. Project Description. The Project Description has not substantially changed since the last hearing and includes: (a) approximately 29,511 square feet of retail/commercial uses, including a major drug store/pharmacy (13,111 square feet), with the remaining retail uses in three additional buildings with parking and landscaping, all located on the eastern portion of the site east of Ohlone Creek; (b) a four-story, 105-room hotel (approx. 63,163 square feet) with parking and landscaping in the approximate center of the site adjacent to the west side of Ohlone Creek; and (c) up to 120 attached residential dwellings units on the western portion of the site (east of Tsushima Street). (See attachment below for proposed development plans.)

The project proposal requires City Council approval of the following actions:

- **Initial Study and CEQA Determination (IS #17-02);**
- **General Plan Amendment (GPA #17-02)** to change the land use designation for the westerly portion of the Project Site from General Commercial (CG) to Planned Commercial–Residential (PC-R) and to change the 2.02-acre Ohlone Creek corridor in the approximate center of the site from General Commercial (CG) to Public/Semi-Public—Open Space (P/SP-OS);
- **Zone Amendment (RZ #17-02)** for the westerly portion of the site, revising the zoning district designation from General Commercial (CG) to Planned Commercial–Residential (PC-R) zoning for the hotel and multi-family residential parcels, and changing the creek corridor that traverses the site from General Commercial (CG) to Public/Quasi-Public—Open Space (P/QP-O);
- **Vesting Tentative Map #9477** subdividing the existing two (2) parcels (totaling approximately 12.88 acres) into seven (7) parcels and relocating utility easements;
- **Initial and Final Planned Development #17-02** to allow the uses described above (this FPDP will supersede FPDP #14-01 that was approved for the site in 2015);
- **Design Review Permit #17-04** (as required by Chapter 13-42 of the Municipal Code), including exterior color and materials, landscaping, lighting, and parking plans, as well as a Master Sign Program (in accordance with Chapter 13-34.400(R) of the Municipal Code);
- **Conditional Use Permit #17-04** to allow: (a) retail stores greater than 2,000 square feet; (b) drive-through facilities for the pharmacy and for a food service pad building; (c) seasonal outdoor sales; (d) a hotel; (e) a shopping center; (f) multi-family residential uses; and (g) beer & wine and potential alcohol sales at retail/restaurant uses; and (h) potential 24-hours of operation at the anchor retail tenant (pharmacy); and
- **Minor Modification #19-02** to allow a reduced minimum number of on-site parking spaces for the proposed 105-room hotel.

The proposed project requires City Council approval for many of the requested applications, including the adoption of an Ordinance. Therefore, as with other projects, the procedure that has been followed is to present all Planning Commission actions as recommendations to the City Council. Draft Resolutions recommending approval of the requested actions are included as attachments to the [July 15 staff report](#), with the modifications to the conditions of approval and plans (Exhibits A & C to Resolution 19-07) included as attachments below.

A. Project Updates since Last Meeting. Based on issues raised at the last meeting by Commissioners and subsequently by City staff, the applicant and City staff propose the following changes to the previously submitted plans and conditions of approval, as reflected in the revised plans (see attachment below):

Design Changes

- **Project Fencing.** The Planning Commission raised concerns about fencing adjacent to the Ohlone Creek open space corridor and storm water quality basins. The applicant has resubmitted plans to indicate two options for lower-height fencing adjacent to these two areas: one option depicts a 42-inch-high “hog wire” mesh fence, and a second option would include a more formal 42-inch-high tubular steel fence (see Sheet L-1.4 of attachment below). The Commission should provide direction to the applicant and staff as to the preferred treatment, though final design is subject to Public Works Director approval (see Conditions of Approval #33 and #52).
- **Relocated Bus Stop.** The bus stop on the north side of Sycamore Avenue has been relocated further east, closer to the intersection with San Pablo Avenue (see Sheet L-2.0).
- **New Signalized Intersection at Commercial Driveway & San Pablo Avenue.** Sheet C-4.4 has been added to present the latest design of the future signalized intersection (connecting to the existing westernmost Hercules Retail Center driveway), as reviewed by the City Engineer.
- **Palm Trees.** As recommended by Planning Commission, the plant palette (see Sheet L-1.1) has been modified to reflect a palm tree species (Canary Island Palm) better suited to local conditions.
- **Corner Sign.** Current design includes option for adding “HERCULES” sign at the project corner facing the intersection of Sycamore Avenue and San Pablo Avenue. Commission should confirm whether or not the sign as proposed is acceptable; if so, Master Sign Program should be modified accordingly.
- **Corner Bollards.** Applicant and staff have proposed several options for planting features/bollards at the corner of Sycamore Avenue and San Pablo Avenue (see Sheet L-1.3). Planning Commission should provide direction on preferred option.
- **Detail for Hotel Plaza.** As requested by the Planning Commission, the revised plans for the proposed hotel plaza now include an elevation/perspective view (see Sheet AH-4.0).
- **Traffic Calming for Ohlone Creek Place.** As requested by City staff, the revised plans have removed special asphalt treatments but added four landscaped “bulb-outs” along Ohlone Creek Place to calm traffic (i.e., reduce vehicle speed).
- **Private Park Playground Apparatus.** The Planning Commission expressed concerns regarding the type, scale, and age-appropriateness of the outdoor play apparatus sited in the community space at the center of the residential area. The applicant has since revised the design of the park and apparatus so as to be used by a wider range of children, not just small children (see Sheet AR-6.1).
- **Intersection of Ohlone Creek Place and Sycamore Avenue.** To create the intersection with the new roadway (Ohlone Creek Place) and to ensure safe sight-distance for vehicles turning onto Sycamore Avenue, nine existing angled parking

spaces on Sycamore Avenue must be eliminated, resulting in a substantial increase to the sidewalk/plaza area so additional on-grade landscaping will be added to the area.

Conditions of Approval Changes

- **Development Milestones.** Condition of Approval #14 has been slightly modified to require that (a) issuance of a building permit for the hotel precede any issuance of building permits for residential buildings, and (b) no more than 25% of the residential unit permits may be issued prior to substantial progress of hotel construction, as determined in writing by the City.
- **Commercial vs. Retail Distinction.** In some instances within the Conditions of Approval, the word “commercial” has been replaced by “retail” to better distinguish between the hotel and retail areas of the project.
- **Electric Vehicle Parking and Recharging Stations:** Condition of Approval #22 has been modified to clarify applicability of CALGreen Code requirements in effect at the time of building permit submittal, not issuance.
- **Preferential Parking District:** Condition of Approval #23 has been simplified by removing language pertaining to the existing Aventine Parking District and related changes that are not the responsibility of the Sycamore Crossing project.
- **Project Fencing.** Staff recommends that the final design and placement of fencing adjacent to the Ohlone Creek open space corridor and proposed stormwater quality basins be subject to Public Works Director approval (see Conditions of Approval #33 and #52) with the intent of using the least visually obtrusive fence that meets safety requirements.
- **Hazardous Materials.** References to the County Hazardous Materials Program (which may not apply to the project) have been removed from Condition of Approval #52.
- **Phasing of Improvements.** A new Condition of Approval (#69) has been added to require that the applicant submit for Public Works Director approval a phasing plan for each discrete component of the project (i.e., hotel, retail, and residential) covering all utility, landscaping, roadway, and other improvements required by the conditions of approval.
- **Public Improvements on Sycamore Avenue.** Parking changes at South Front Street, which are not part of nor the responsibility of the Sycamore Crossing project, have been removed from Condition of Approval #79 (now #80).
- **Traffic Signal on San Pablo Avenue.** Reference to the potential addition of a second out-bound lane at the westernmost driveway of the Hercules Retail Center has been removed from Condition of Approval #80 (now #81) as the additional lane is unnecessary (as determined through traffic queuing analysis).
- **Sidewalk/Parkway/Crosswalk Maintenance.** Conditions of Approval #83 (now #84) and #104 (now #105) has been modified to indicate that maintenance of

sidewalks, landscaping, and irrigation shall be the responsibility of the respective abutting property owner (e.g., retail, hotel, or residential).

- **Monument Sign.** At the request of the Commission, a new condition of approval (#134) has been added to allow the hotel applicant an off-site identification monument sign at the northeast corner of the intersection of San Pablo Avenue and Ohlone Creek Place (outside public right-of-way and visual clear area), as long as the property owner provides written agreement to allow such signage.
- **Retail Hours of Operation.** Condition of Approval #135 has been added to allow the anchor tenant of the retail center (pharmacy with drive through) to operate up to 24 hours per day.
- **Alcohol Service.** Condition of Approval #136 has been added to restrict alcoholic beverage sales and service to indoors and fenced patio areas and to reinforce applicable Alcohol Beverage Control requirements.
- **Outdoor Entertainment.** Condition of Approval #137 has been added to ensure no entertainment, televisions, or other audio systems from the commercial buildings shall be audible to adjacent residents, except as allowed by a special event/temporary use permit issued by the City.
- **Outdoor Commercial Storage.** Condition of Approval #138 has been added to prohibit storage of material outside the hotel and commercial buildings.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of the Project set forth in the previous Staff Report, Planning Staff continues to recommend Planning Commission approval of the various applications comprising the Project, subject to revised Conditions of Approval and revised project plans.

5. ATTACHMENTS

Attachments remain the same as the [July 15, 2019, Planning Commission packet](#) with the following revisions:

- Draft Resolution #19-05 (Attachment 1) recommends that the City Council approve General Plan Amendment (GPA 17-02).
- Draft Resolution #19-06 (Attachment 2) recommends that the City Council adopt an Ordinance approving the Zone Amendment (RZ 17-02).
- Draft Resolution #19-07 (Attachment 3) recommends that the City Council approve:
 - Initial/Final Planned Development Plan #17-02;
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 - Vesting Tentative Map #9477, including relocation of existing utility easements; and

- Minor Exception #19-02 for minimum parking reduction.
- Revised Conditions of Approval (Exhibit A to Resolution 19-07)
 - Draft version
 - Draft version with tracked changes
- Revised project plans (Exhibit C to Resolution 19-07)