



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence
Planning and Building



Date: January 28, 2016
Board Meeting Date: February 9, 2016
Special Notice / Hearing: 10-day/900 feet
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Steve Monowitz, Community Development Director

Subject: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Public hearing to consider an appeal of the Planning Commission's approval of a Major Subdivision, a Grading Permit, and certification of a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR), pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), for the proposed Ascension Heights Subdivision located in the unincorporated San Mateo Highlands area of San Mateo County. The project includes the subdivision of the 13.32-acre subject site (Water Tank Hill) into 21 legal parcels for development of 19 single-family dwellings with the remaining two lots as conservation (Lot A) and common space (Lot C) areas, which includes a main private access road. The project site is accessed from Bel Aire Road north of Ascension Drive.

RECOMMENDATION:

Deny the appeal and uphold the Planning Commission's decision to approve the project, by:

1. Approving the vesting tentative map for a major subdivision, the grading permit, and the removal of nine significant trees by making the findings and adopting the conditions of approval as set forth in Attachment A; and
2. Adopting a resolution certifying the Final Environmental Impact Report for the Ascension Heights Subdivision project as complete, correct and adequate and prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act; and
3. Adopting a resolution adopting (1) the Mitigation Monitoring Report and the reporting program for the Ascension Heights Subdivision project, and (2) the Statement of Findings and Facts in Support of Findings regarding the Ascension Heights Subdivision project.

BACKGROUND:

The current project is a revised version of a 25-lot proposed subdivision that was denied by the Planning Commission on December 9, 2009. On December 23, 2009, the applicant filed an appeal of the Planning Commission's denial and submitted a revised alternative which attempted to address issues raised at the Planning Commission hearing. On June 29, 2010, the Board of Supervisors remanded the application back to the Planning Commission.

An update regarding the remanded project was provided to the Planning Commission on July 17, 2010, which was followed by a series of staff facilitated meetings between the applicant and community members from November 2010 through September 2011. A total of ten meetings were held, during which topics including zoning, traffic, geotechnical/soil stability, drainage/hydrology, housing designs, bonding, and air quality were discussed. Throughout these meetings, community members consistently advocated for fewer lots in order to protect views, privacy, and construction impacts, among other reasons.

On November 18, 2011, the applicant submitted a revised plan that reduced the number of developable lots from 25 to 19. The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the revised project was published on April 25, 2014, and a Planning Commission hearing on the DEIR was held on May 14, 2014. The Final EIR was released in November 2014, and the Planning Commission held its first public hearing on the revised project on January 28, 2015. The Planning Commission continued the hearing in order to receive additional public testimony, and to have additional time to deliberate on the matter. The Planning Commission conducted the second hearing on the revised project on February 24, 2015, and continued the hearing in order to allow staff to draft findings for denial, and to allow the applicant to submit additional materials in response to the Planning Commission's concerns.

On October 14, 2015, the Planning Commission held its final hearing on the revised project, and took action to approve the project and certify the EIR. The appeal of this decision was filed on October 28, 2015.

DISCUSSION:

The appeal challenges the adequacy of the EIR, and raises objections regarding the impacts of the project. Specifically, the appeal raises concerns regarding the project's impacts on views and privacy, biological resources, air quality, stormwater runoff, noise, and site stability. These concerns are analyzed in detailed by the staff report and the Final EIR, which has been updated to respond to comments that have been received since the October 14, 2015 Planning Commission meeting. Based on these analyses, staff and the EIR consultant have concluded that the EIR complies with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act, and that the project is consistent with the San Mateo County General Plan and Subdivision Regulations.

With regard to concerns about the project's impact on the views, privacy, and the quality of life of surrounding residents, recommended conditions of approval require:

A 20-foot no-build area where accessory buildings would otherwise be allowed in the rear of proposed lots adjoining Parrott Drive residences;

Planting and maintaining trees and landscaping to screen the development from Parrott Drive residences; and

Limiting the height of new homes to 28 feet (as compared to 36 feet as allowed by zoning) and enforcing design guidelines that maintain low profiles for homes on sloped lots.

County Counsel has reviewed and approved the report as to form.

Approval of the Major Subdivision and a Grading Permit, and certification of a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) contributes to the 2025 Shared Vision outcome of a Livable Community, as the project would allow for the establishment of housing which is consistent with the County's land use regulations, including the General Plan, Zoning Regulations, and Subdivision Regulations.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Approval by the Board of Supervisors would result in a marginal property tax revenue increase with the tax being assessed on future residential construction.