

Development interest springs across San Bruno

Three proposals along El Camino Real join variety of other nearby developments in growing city

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San Bruno's stretch of El Camino Real is undergoing a transformation, as officials weigh three development proposals along the popular thoroughfare while other sizable projects build toward completion nearby.

Officials are examining separate hotel and residential development proposals on the southern end of El Camino Real, while another developer balances mixed-use opportunities near downtown.

The three projects, in combination with the handful of others, make for a busy time in San Bruno, said Community Development Director David Woltering.

"It's clearly a community that is going through a very active period of development and a very active period of positive transformation," said Woltering.

Of the three proposed developments, the southernmost at 160 El Camino Real is an application to build a three-story hotel with 33 rooms and an underground parking garage.

Woltering said the future operator of the hotel is yet to be determined, but expects details of the project to become more clear as it works through the public planning process.

"I would expect if we stay on track, that the application would be reviewed, considered and possibly approved based on decision makers' determination in early 2019," he said of the currently vacant site.

Just north at 271 El Camino Real, a three-story residential project comprised of 24

townhomes and apartments was proposed at the site which used to be Lee's Buffet restaurant.

Woltering said the property owners are leading the redevelopment effort, and have already hosted a series of community meetings in an effort to alert neighbors of their vision for the site.

“The idea here is to provide residential units that front onto El Camino Real,” he said. “They would be landscaped to provide an attractive entrance, they would be near transportation and they would provide more housing in our community and our area where we need more.”

Woltering added 15 percent of the units would be set aside at an affordable rate, and the combination of home ownership as well as rental opportunities would diversify the city's housing stock.

The project is on the same schedule as the hotel, he said, which would put it on track for approval around the beginning of next year.

The northernmost development site is 850 El Camino Real, where developers are crafting the vision for a mixed-used project near downtown at the former home of the Budget Motel.

Woltering said the site is zoned for allowing commercial space on the street with residential units above, an entirely residential development or a hotel or motel, but the developers have not yet determined a preference.

“The property owner has been considering all options and hasn't really come to a decision on a clear direction for reuse and redevelopment at the site,” he said.

The site is in the area bounded by San Bruno's transit corridor plan, which promotes dense, transit-oriented development under an effort to establish new jobs and homes in close proximity to the city's downtown train station.

Woltering said the city's vision for El Camino Real aims for a similar goal, in alignment with the larger Grand Boulevard Initiative, which promotes the same sort of redevelopment along the thoroughfare from Daly City to San Jose.

“The vision of both the Grand Boulevard Initiative and the transit corridor plan is to encourage a more compact development form, a mix of land uses that link housing, employment, retail and services with transportation options,” he said.

The goals of those plans will be furthered through the coming completion of the former El Camino Cinema site, where Sares Regis is building a new three-story project with 83 apartments and 7,000 square feet of retail space at the corner of San Mateo and Taylor avenues on El Camino Real. Woltering said the project, which was the first built since the corridor plan was approved, should be ready for occupancy by the end of the year or early 2019.

At the other end of downtown, near where San Bruno and San Mateo avenues meet, another 60 residential units are proposed above 8,600 square feet of retail space on the ground floor adjacent to the Caltrain station.

Mills Park Plaza applicant Signature Development Company also expressed interest in building a vast residential project offering 400 new apartments and 45,000 square feet of retail space spread across roughly 4.5 acres of property near City Hall at the corner of El Camino Real and San Bruno Avenue. The proposal is still under planning review.

With all the development interest and building going on, Woltering characterized the moment as a transformational period in San Bruno.

“We’ve experienced a good level of interest and projects moving forward,” he said.

In other news, Woltering announced his retirement, effective Friday, Aug. 24, after more than five years in San Bruno. He said he is interested in taking on similar work at a regional level.

“I am extremely proud of the work and accomplishments of the members of the San Bruno organization,” he said in a prepared statement.

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