



PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

Virtual Meeting
Albany, CA 94706

MINUTES OF SPECIAL & REGULAR MEETINGS WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2021

SPECIAL MEETING: 5:00 PM

Chair Watty called the special meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission to order at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 22, 2021.

Present: Donaldson, MacLeod, Momin, Pilch, Watty
Absent: None
Staff Present: Planning Manager Anne Hersch
Associate Planner Christopher Tan

1. STUDY SESSION

1-1. San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan – Receive a presentation on the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan project regarding revised land use policies and provide feedback on the policies presented or additional ideas generated during the discussion.

Recommendation: Receive a presentation and provide feedback on these issues.

CEQA: Once draft amendments are prepared, staff will work with a CEQA consultant.

Jean Eisberg, Lexington Planning, presented the staff report dated September 22, 2021.

Mark Rhoades, planner and developer, discussed construction costs, rents and sale prices, and factors that affect pricing. The draft Specific Plan is heading in the right direction. Seven- to eight-story buildings are more feasible than five- to six-story buildings due to economies of scale in construction pricing. Cities should regulate building height rather than number of stories. A floor area ratio (FAR) of 3.5 is too low. Given the allowed lot coverages and setbacks, a 5.0 FAR for six- to seven-story buildings would be feasible. Requiring 1:1 bike parking and space for electric and long-tail bikes is good. Vehicle parking of 1:1 with options to reduce parking is reasonable. Setbacks and step-backs increase the cost of projects and reduce the number of units without substantially increasing daylight for adjacent structures. Building separation is more important than a setback. A requirement for 100 square feet of open space per unit is high. Proposed requirements for public open space, retail space, and a mid-block connection are not feasible for lots of 5,000-5,500 square feet. Developers prefer to pay in-lieu fees for street and open space and affordable units. Requiring all electric construction, onsite public art, solar arrays, and electric vehicle charging is feasible.



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1 PUBLIC HEARING OPENED
2

3 **Ed Fields** noted that "higher density" is not included in the General Plan's guiding
4 statement about transforming the corridor. The Specific Plan seems to create more
5 exceptions for ground-floor commercial space. If height limits are doubled, every parcel
6 will be a housing opportunity site. Under the State Density Bonus Law, the City can
7 control only the density of a project. Ms. Eisberg stated that a State process is needed
8 to exceed the 15% inclusionary requirement. Yet, a 20% inclusionary requirement is
9 proposed for a building taller than 68 feet.

10
11 **Harry Chomsky** suggested Commissioners consider the objective of each development
12 requirement and encouraged Commissioners to increase the vehicle parking requirement
13 and decrease the bike parking requirement. Spillover parking can be addressed with a
14 parking management program.

15
16 **Clay Larson** believed the Specific Plan process is illegal and a waste of time. The
17 application of State Density Bonus Law standards to existing development standards can
18 produce all the infill development needed. Trying to satisfy Albany's Regional Housing
19 Needs Allocation (RHNA) on one street is not fair and violates State law. Very-high-
20 density development on 100-foot-deep San Pablo Avenue parcels should not be
21 permitted. Misleading representations in the staff report reduce its value.

22
23 **Nick Peterson**, speaking as an individual, supported an increase in the requirement for
24 bicycle parking. Focusing on a better, more mobile environment where people can use
25 alternative transportation can result in higher density that is livable.

26
27 **Nico Nagle** remarked that increasing the density along the San Pablo Corridor is the
28 Specific Plan's best feature

29
30 PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED

31
32 Commissioners supported the proposed amendments as follows:

33
34 Building height: Donaldson no, MacLeod yes but preferred 85 feet/8 stories along the
35 entire corridor with additional changes, Momin yes but preferred 58 feet with additional
36 community benefits for 85 feet, Pilch yes but preferred 85 feet/8 stories along the entire
37 corridor, Watty yes

38
39 R-3 height transition: Donaldson yes with concerns, MacLeod yes with concerns, Momin
40 yes with changes to open space dimensions, Pilch yes with changes, Watty yes but not
41 additional step-backs

42
43 Residential density: Donaldson no and preferred a maximum, MacLeod yes, Momin yes,
44 Pilch yes, Watty yes



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2 FAR: Donaldson preferred 3.0, MacLeod no and preferred a greater FAR and discussion
3 of eliminating FAR, Momin yes and preferred 3.5 with discussion of higher density at
4 nodes, Pilch yes but preferred a higher FAR or eliminating FAR, Watty no and preferred
5 a higher FAR or eliminating FAR
6

7 Open space: Donaldson yes, MacLeod yes but preferred a lower requirement, Momin
8 yes, Pilch yes but preferred 80 square feet, Watty yes
9

10 Residential vehicle parking: Donaldson yes but preferred no less than .75, MacLeod no
11 and preferred no minimum and consideration of a maximum, Momin yes with a maximum,
12 Pilch no but preferred 1 typical bicycle space and 1 cargo-bike space per unit, Watty yes
13

14 Use limitations: Donaldson no and preferred to eliminate Housing Element sites outside
15 nodes and the conditional use permit (CUP), MacLeod no and preferred ground-floor
16 commercial along the entire corridor except in 100% affordable housing, Momin no and
17 preferred ground-floor commercial except in 100% affordable housing, Pilch yes but
18 preferred stronger incentives or requirements for ground-floor commercial outside nodes,
19 Watty no and preferred to exempt 100% affordable housing and eliminate Housing
20 Element sites
21

22 Community benefits: Donaldson yes but preferred 15 percent and more discussion of
23 benefits, MacLeod yes but preferred more discussion of benefit structure, Momin yes for
24 68-foot height and more discussion of benefits for 85-foot height, Pilch yes but preferred
25 to highly incentivize 20 percent inclusionary projects, Watty yes for 20 percent with more
26 discussion of sustainability
27

28 Chair Watty expressed concerns regarding a mandate for the size of retail space because
29 a large space would probably be appropriate for a chain store only. A more appropriate
30 size to create a pedestrian-oriented environment is probably 5,000 square feet. She
31 preferred the Specific Plan be silent regarding the size of retail space. A ceiling height of
32 15 feet is sufficient for retail spaces of 5,000 square feet. A mid-block cut-through is
33 appropriate in unusual circumstances only, such as a through-lot with a 300-400-foot
34 street frontage. The Commission may wish to require a suite of public improvements for
35 exceptionally large projects.
36

37 Commissioner Pilch concurred with Chair Watty's comments regarding the size of retail
38 space. The Commission should incentivize cut-throughs as much as possible because
39 they can be a great community benefit. An additional meeting is needed to fully discuss
40 issues.
41

42 Commissioner Momin supported conversion of unneeded parking as long as there are
43 clear criteria for evaluation of parking. The Commission should require a minimum of 25
44 percent compact parking spaces and a maximum of 50 percent, require dedicated parking



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1 for carshare services like Zipcar, and provide clear guidelines for transit passes and
2 electric vehicle charging connections.

3
4 Commissioner MacLeod believed the Commission has not discussed the impact of the
5 cost of parking on rent and affordability. Parking should be unbundled. Mr. Johnson's
6 letter provides good information. Better modeling of parking is needed before parking
7 requirements are decided. More robust bike parking should be required.

8
9 Commissioner Donaldson favored bundled parking.

10
11 Commissioner Pilch supported unbundled parking for rental units and condominiums.
12 The goal is to change San Pablo Avenue from car-centric to pedestrian-oriented, but the
13 requirements for vehicle and bike parking remain the same.

14 15 2. ADJOURNMENT OF STUDY SESSION

16 17 REGULAR MEETING: 7:00 PM

18 19 1. CALL TO ORDER

20
21
22 Chair Watty called the regular meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission to order
23 at 7:15 p.m. on Wednesday, September 22, 2021.

24 25 2. ROLL CALL

26
27 Present: Donaldson, MacLeod, Momin, Pilch, Watty
28 Absent: None
29 Staff Present: Planning Manager Anne Hersch
30 Associate Planner Christopher Tan

31 32 3. EX PARTE COMMUNICATIONS

33
34 None

35 36 4. CONSENT CALENDAR

37 38 4-1. Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes September 8, 2021

39
40 **Recommendation:** Staff recommends that the Planning & Zoning Commission
41 review and approve the meeting minutes.

42
43 Commissioner Donaldson corrected "property owner" to "shopping center owner" on page
44 6, line 13.



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Commissioner Momin advised that for the consent calendar, he recused himself from PA21-052 rather than PA21-060.

4-2. **Contd. from 9/8/21 PA21-052 Design Review for a Two-Level Addition at 1467 Portland Avenue** – The applicant is seeking Design Review approval for a two-level addition at 1467 Portland Avenue. The subject property is a 5,000-sq.-ft. lot with a 3-bedroom, 1-bathroom, 1,670-sq.-ft. split-level house built in 1930. The project scope includes minor additions on the main and basement levels to accommodate modest expansions to the kitchen, bedroom, and office. The second-story addition is proposed to accommodate a new master suite and laundry room. This results in a total of 946 sq. ft. of new area to the home. The existing Story-Book style of the home is proposed to remain. This will result in a 4-bedroom, 2-bathroom, 2,616-sq.-ft. home with a maximum height of 27'-9". A new detached garage and parking pad are proposed on the north end of the property to accommodate two off-street parking spaces in tandem configurations.

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the Planning & Zoning Commission continue the matter to a date uncertain at the request of the applicant.

CEQA: The project is Categorical exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15303 "New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures" of the CEQA Guidelines.

4-3. PA21-061 Design Review & Parking Reduction for a Two-Level Addition at 1101 Key Route Boulevard – The applicant is seeking Design Review and Parking Reduction approval for a two-level addition at 1101 Key Route Boulevard. The subject property is a 2,982-sq.-ft. lot with a 2-bedroom, 1-bathroom, 1,130-sq.-ft. home built in 1925. The project scope includes expanding the existing attached garage and main levels of the home and building a second-story addition. The main-level expansion and remodel includes a bedroom, office/den, and new bathroom. The second-story addition is proposed to accommodate a new master suite. The existing Mission/Craftsman style of the home is proposed to remain. This will result in a 3-bedroom, 3-bathroom, 1,593-sq.-ft. home with a maximum height of 28 feet. A Parking Reduction is required to waive one off-street parking space.

Recommendation: Staff recommends that the Planning & Zoning Commission review and approve the project request subject to the findings and Conditions of Approval.

CEQA: The project is Categorical exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15303 "New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures" of the CEQA Guidelines.



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1 **Motion to approve** the consent calendar with amendments to the September 8,
2 2021 meeting minutes. Donaldson
3 Seconded by Momin
4 AYES: Donaldson, MacLeod, Momin, Pilch (Items 4-2 and 4-3), Watty
5 NAYES: None
6 ABSTAIN: Pilch (Item 4-1)
7 ABSENT: None
8 **Motion passed, 5-0-0-0**

9
10 Chair Watty noted the appeal period.

12 **5. ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS/DISCUSSION**

13
14 None

16 **6. PUBLIC COMMENT**

17
18 None

20 **7. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON MATTERS RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:**

21
22
23 **7-1. **Contd. from 9/8/21** PA21-062 UC Village Master Sign Program**
24 **Amendment** – The Master Sign Program for the University Village Shopping
25 Center was approved on September 9, 2015 and did not include policies for digital
26 advertising. An application has been filed for new electric vehicle charging stations
27 at University Village Shopping Center, which include digital advertising. The
28 proposed amendment to the Master Sign Program would allow digital advertising
29 on the electric vehicle chargers only. All previously approved sign regulations
30 under the UC Village Master Sign Program are proposed to remain.

31
32 **Recommendation:** Staff recommends that the Planning & Zoning Commission
33 review and approve the project request subject to the findings and Conditions of
34 Approval.

35
36 **CEQA:** The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was certified by the City Council
37 via Resolution #2011-51, as well as an addendum to the EIR approved on May 6,
38 2013. An environmental impact report for the project was approved by the City
39 Council in July 2012. The proposed sign design review does not generate new or
40 substantially more severe impacts than what were previously analyzed in the
41 project EIR.

42
43 Associate Planner Christopher Tan presented the staff report dated September 22, 2021.

44



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1 Commissioner Donaldson reported that he observed charging stations with electronic
2 advertising displays in Concord. The electronic screen was located on one side of the
3 unit, and a paper sign was affixed to the opposite side. The units were sited to catch the
4 attention of pedestrians from the store. A variety of ads appeared on the screens for
5 approximately 15 seconds each. The displays did not have audio.
6

7 When asked, **Neil Pallaver**, Volta representative, related that screens dim at night. The
8 version 2 station in Concord has a static display on one side. The version 4 station has
9 digital screens on both sides. He did not know the reason for the installation of only two
10 stations. One of the proposed charging stations is a Level 2 charger, and the other is a
11 DC fast charger. If the number of charging stations is increased, towers with screens
12 would not be installed in a row. The tower is designed to accommodate two DC fast
13 chargers. Because only one DC fast charger is proposed, the tower can be expanded in
14 the future to accommodate a second DC fast charger. Volta is investigating other
15 concepts for the tower, but none have been approved. Typically, charging stations are
16 turned off when the business is closed. The displays can likely be programmed to turn
17 on and off at specific times. He agreed to provide information regarding programming
18 operation times and was not aware of plans to install additional stations in the future.
19

20 PUBLIC HEARING OPENED

21
22 **David Asarnow** inquired regarding plans to remove graffiti from towers.

23
24 **Peter Campbell** asked about consequences for vehicles that park in the space but do
25 not utilize the charging station.
26

27 Mr. Pallaver explained that users may report graffiti to Volta, who will dispatch a tech team
28 to address it. Volta cannot issue citations or tow vehicles. Electric vehicle owners are
29 good about policing themselves. The parking stalls will not comply with Americans With
30 Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and will not be signed as handicapped spaces.
31

32 PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED

33
34 Commissioner Pilch proposed including a requirement for any lighted sign to adjust to
35 ambient lighting. He appreciated the installation of charging stations and asked staff to
36 encourage the property owner and/or shopping center owner to install additional stations.
37

38 Commissioner Donaldson related that the concerns he raised at the prior meeting have
39 been addressed.
40

41 **Motion to approve** PA21-062 for UC Village Master Sign Program Amendment
42 subject to the findings and Conditions of Approval and an additional Condition of
43 Approval requiring the stations to be sensitive to ambient light, dim at night, and
44 operate during the business' hours of operation. Donaldson



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1 Seconded by Pilch

2 AYES: Donaldson, MacLeod, Momin, Pilch Watty

3 NAYES: None

4 ABSTAIN: None

5 ABSENT: None

6 **Motion passed, 5-0-0-0**

7
8 Chair Watty noted the appeal period.

9
10 **7-2. PA21-058 Design Review for a Second-Story Addition at 919 Ramona Avenue**

11 - The applicant is seeking Design Review approval for a second-story addition at
12 919 Ramona Avenue. The subject property is a 4,290-sq.-ft. lot with a 2-bedroom,
13 1-bathroom, 1,390-sq.-ft. house built in 1926. The project scope includes interior
14 remodeling and reprogramming on the main level and a 549-sq.-ft. second-story
15 addition to accommodate a new master suite for the home. A new rear deck is
16 proposed off the main level of the home. Two roof terraces are proposed on the
17 2nd level of the home along with a roof deck on top of the proposed 2nd story
18 addition. The applicant is proposing contemporary architectural style for the home.
19 This will result in a 3-bedroom, 2-bedroom, 1,939-sq.-ft. home with a maximum
20 height of 24'-5". Two off-street parking spaces are provided in the existing driveway
21 in a tandem configuration.

22
23 **Recommendation:** Staff recommends that the Planning & Zoning Commission
24 review the proposed project, provide feedback to the applicant, and continue the
25 matter to a date certain of October 13, 2021 to allow for proper story pole
26 installation.

27
28 **CEQA:** The project is Categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15303
29 ("new Construction or Conversion of Small Structures" of the CEQA Guidelines.

30
31 Associate Planner Tan presented the staff report dated September 22, 2021.

32
33 **Thomas Biggs**, project architect, indicated the goal is to minimize the height of the
34 addition and integrate it into the house. The low wall of the roof deck obscures the view
35 of people sitting on the roof deck but allows them to view the sky. Additional landscaping
36 could further mitigate privacy concerns. He indicated that he convinced the homeowners
37 to retain the front entry porch because it helps reinforce the historic quality of the street
38 edge. Forms existing in the neighborhood have been applied to the project. Exterior
39 lighting will comply with dark sky requirements. The house needs some improvement.
40 He requested comments regarding the spiral stair specifically. When asked, Mr. Biggs
41 explained that the picture window was designed to frame the outside world through the
42 shape of a circle. The deck railings are shown as glass but will probably be wire. The
43 railings will comply with height requirements. The homeowners will probably agree not
44 to install a fence if it interferes with use of the neighbor's driveway. The two pointed



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1 features on the front of the home will remain. The dormer windows are designed to
2 reference a bird's wing and are tall to provide a larger view of the sky. The window reveal
3 will measure 2 inches as required. The window will probably be recessed 2 inches from
4 the face of the stucco siding. Windows will be aluminum-clad. A landscape plan will be
5 submitted. The Hardie board siding will have a smooth finish.

6 7 PUBLIC HEARING OPENED

8
9 **David Asarnow** encouraged the applicants to improve communications with neighbors
10 and expressed concern regarding the upper deck's impact on privacy. He inquired
11 whether fencing would be required to address safety concerns.

12
13 **Mary Taylor Asarnow** expressed concern regarding the short distance between the rear
14 stairs and the property line.

15
16 **Tree Gelb Stuber** expressed concerns regarding the placement of grasses near the
17 sidewalk. Low-height, drought-tolerant plants would be a better choice.

18 19 PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED

20
21 Chair Watty supported the design as the massing is appropriate and the addition
22 modernizes the house for the homeowners' needs. Additional cross-sections showing
23 sightlines into adjacent neighbors' properties would be helpful. The upper deck railings
24 could be taller to decrease sightlines and limit visibility. If the roof deck continues to be a
25 privacy concern for neighbors, it will likely be at risk for removal. Consulting a landscape
26 architect to prepare a landscape plan is advisable. Landscaping could be integrated into
27 the stair to minimize sightlines into the neighbor's backyard. The circular window on the
28 vertical addition is not contextual with surrounding architecture. However, a high-quality
29 window with a 2-inch reveal will help integrate it.

30
31 Commissioner Donaldson concurred with Chair Watty's comments. Design Review
32 guidelines provide a specific policy for roof decks. The overall concept is daring but not
33 distasteful.

34
35 Commissioner MacLeod viewed the upper roof deck as a place for people to sit. In
36 actuality, roof decks typically are not used often. Tall plantings along the rear stair would
37 be helpful. The butterfly roof may need to meet the ridge in a more direct fashion. The
38 design for the rear of the house is creative. The circular window provides a symmetrical
39 design for the upper part. He urged the homeowners to work with the neighbor regarding
40 the fence.

41
42 Commissioner Pilch encouraged the homeowners to alter the fence in response to the
43 neighbor's concern. The wing windows could be lowered to create a horizontal plane.



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1 Solid railings on the upper roof deck would probably be a good way to address privacy
2 concerns.

3
4 Commissioner Donaldson noted an attractive round window in another building in Albany.

5
6 Commissioner MacLeod advised that there is no requirement for netting around
7 scaffolding, but the contractor could install some type of protective screening and should
8 keep the area free of debris.

9
10 Commissioner Momin remarked that a material change without a plane change
11 sometimes feels strange. If a plane change for the Hardie panels is not possible, a strong
12 reveal would be helpful. Hardie panels floating above the ground looks strange without
13 a plane change. Extending the panels would help them appear grounded. The panel
14 size seems to be too big for a residential project and could be smaller and more horizontal.
15 The joint line should be coordinated with the windows.

16
17 Commissioner Pilch suggested use of the term cement siding unless the Hardie brand of
18 siding is proposed.

19
20 **Motion to continue** PA21-058 for 919 Ramona Avenue to October 13, 2021.

21 Donaldson

22 Seconded by Pilch

23 AYES: Donaldson, MacLeod, Momin, Pilch, Watty

24 NAYES: None

25 ABSTAIN: None

26 ABSENT: None

27 **Motion passed, 5-0-0-0**

28
29 **8. NEW BUSINESS**

30
31 None

32
33 **9. NEXT MEETING – September 29, 2021**, City Hall Council Chambers, 1000 San Pablo
34 Avenue or virtual meeting pursuant to state and county guidance

35
36 **10. ADJOURNMENT**

37
38 The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

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40
41
42

Submitted by: Anne Hersch, Planning Manager



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Jeff Bond, Community Development Director