

**CITY OF ALBANY
PLANNING AND ZONING AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda date: 03/10/09
Prepared by: JB
Reviewed by: AC

ITEM/ 6b

SUBJECT: Discussion and Recommendation to the City Council Regarding Acquisition of Property at 842 Masonic Avenue for Expansion of the Senior Center.

SITE: 842 Masonic Avenue

RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning and Zoning Commission provide a recommendation to the City Council regarding acquisition of property at 842 Masonic Avenue for expansion of the Senior Center.

BACKGROUND

On March 2, 2009, the City Council requested that the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Park and Recreation Commission provide a recommendation to the Council on the potential acquisition of property at 842 Masonic Avenue for expansion of the Senior Center. The attached City Council staff report summarizes the potential programmatic objectives that could be achieved by the acquisition and expansion of the Senior Center (Attachment 1). The Park and Recreation Commission will address the issue at their meeting on March 12, 2009. Ten-day public notice of the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Parks and Recreation Commission meetings were mailed to properties within 300 feet (Attachment 2).

DISCUSSION

The Commission should provide a recommendation to the City Council in the context of land use policies that may arise from the potential acquisition. As noted in the staff report to the City Council, there appear to be advantages to expansion at the current location in the center of the City and close to transit and services on Solano Avenue. In addition, there is relatively ample street parking on Masonic Avenue next to the BART tracks. The property, however, is located in an R-1 district and is surrounded on two sides by single-family homes. Photographs of 842 Masonic and the surrounding properties are attached (Attachment 3).

The Commission also should provide any direction to the Council regarding massing, design, and parking issues that should be considered if the project moves forward. The 842 Masonic property is located in the R-1 district. The Senior Center would be considered a park and recreation facility, which is allowed in the R-1 district with a use permit. In the R-1 district, site

regulations for public uses are different than for single-family uses. In particular, lot coverage and setbacks are determined by the Commission on use permit/design review basis. In addition, maximum building height is 35 feet. There is no reference to a FAR for public uses. In addition, per the Planning and Zoning Code, parking standards are determined on a use permit basis as well.

The acquisition of the adjacent 3,800 square foot property would allow for expansion of the facility with a modest disruption of the existing facility. Detailed facility planning will be needed in order to evaluate the best alternatives. Staff's current concept would be to merge the 842 Masonic parcel with the existing senior center parcel, and construct an addition to the north. A single story building would be most affordable and efficient, and could allow for a 50% increase in senior center square footage, while meeting standard front, side and rear yard setbacks. A more aggressive expansion program could involve a second story or a larger footprint.

CONCLUSION

The issue expected to be presented to the City Council in April is whether the City should acquire the property. If the Commission were to have issues with the land use policies associated with an expansion of the senior center at this location, it would be helpful for the Commission to express those concerns before acquisition of the parcel.

ATTACHMENT

1. City Council staff report March 2, 2009
2. Public Notice
3. Photographs

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: March 2, 2009

Reviewed by: BP

SUBJECT: Preliminary Discussion Regarding Acquisition of Property at 842
Masonic Avenue for Expansion of the Senior Center

REPORT BY: Jeff Bond, Planning & Building Manager

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Authorize staff to:

1. Ask the Parks and Recreation Commission to advise on acquisition of the property and expansion of the senior center; and
2. Submit an application for a conditional use permit to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

BACKGROUND

In January 2009, the single family home located at 842 Masonic, adjacent to the Senior Center, was listed for sale. The home is a 3-bedroom one-bath home built in 1930 with 1,365 square feet, as well as a one-car garage and laundry area. The property is owned by a family trust, and has been vacant for a number of months.

The City Council met in executive session on February 2, 2009 and provided negotiating parameters to the City Administrator regarding the exploration of acquisition of the home as a site for expansion of the senior center. The discussions led to the seller accepting a contingent offer from the City to purchase the property, subject to inspections and various city approvals including financing and land use approval.

DISCUSSION

In the 2000 Census, the City of Albany had 1,819 residents 65 years or older. The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) prepares forecasts of population growth by age group for Alameda County. Applying county-wide growth rates to the Albany population, results in an estimated increase in senior population to 4,804 citizens by the year 2030.

The senior center is the City's primary facility for serving the growing senior population. It is ideally located in the center of the City and close to transit and services on Solano

Avenue. In addition, there is relatively ample street parking on Masonic Avenue next to the BART tracks. The existing senior center consists of a classroom, a multi-purpose room with a kitchen, a library in the lobby area, and workstations for staff and volunteers. Total building area is approximately 4,000 square feet. The existing facility is heavily used, and additional programs could be provided if space was available.

The acquisition of the adjacent 3,800 square foot property would allow for expansion of the facility with a modest disruption of the existing facility. There are a wide range of potential programmatic objectives for the senior center, several of which could be accomplished with an expansion, including:

- New activity room/class room;
- Parking for the new van
- New entry area
- New kitchen
- New restrooms
- Upgrade mechanical equipment spaces/storage
- New volunteer and staff work stations

Detailed facility planning will be needed in order to fully evaluate the best alternatives. One approach to the additional space would be to create a new activity room in the expansion area, along with one or two of the other programmatic objectives. Care would be taken in this process to make sure that an expansion is compatible with neighboring residences and the Solano Avenue business district. In general, in an R-1 district, a single family home could be built to 28 feet in height with 2,062 square feet of building area. Staff's initial assessment is that a single story addition with standard R-1 district setbacks would be most cost efficient. Cost of an addition could be in the range of \$500,000.

In lieu of meeting senior center needs with this expansion, other alternatives to meeting programmatic needs include:

1. Add second story to existing facility – It appears that the existing buildings were not designed in a manner that would comply with current building structural codes. Thus, a two story building on the existing parcel would require demolition of the existing facility and construction of an entirely new building. Construction would involve a 12 to 18 month disruption to senior center activities. Cost of a new two-story building on the existing City parcel could be in the \$1,000,000 to \$2,000,000 range.
2. Purchase new facility – Staff is not aware of any existing property in the City with 4,000 to 6,000 square feet of space that would be adequate to serve the City's needs. If such a property were to become available, it is assumed that at current market conditions, cost would be in the \$2,000,000 to \$3,000,000 range.
3. Interim Use – Preliminary results of inspections is that the existing home needs substantial work in order to be safely used as a rental. The foundation is in poor

condition, windows are deteriorated, and the electrical system is antiquated. Cost of upgrades could exceed \$100,000. Rather than invest funds into the property for an interim use, staff would propose to maintain the building in its current vacant state until the City is ready to proceed with the expansion project.

4. Re-sale - In the event that the City acquires the property, but then decides not to proceed with expansion of the facility, the City retains the ability to sell the property in its present condition. The relative gain or loss from this alternative depends on real estate market conditions.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT

One of the key principles of sustainable development is to utilize existing construction as much as practical. The existing senior center is functional, and its functional life can be extended and its energy efficiency could be improved by incorporating new energy efficient mechanical systems in the new area that would serve the new expansion area as well as the existing building. The center is accessible by public transit and is adjacent to the Ohlone Greenway bicycle/pedestrian path and the Solano Avenue business district.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Purchase of the property and the expansion project can be funded by the City's annual allocation of funds from the Community Development Block Grant program. Other potential sources of funds include the City's Landscaping & Lighting Assessment District, Measure F 2002, parkland in-lieu dedication fees, East Bay Regional Park District Measure WW allocation, grants, and fundraising.

CONCLUSION

The actions by the Parks & Recreation Commission and the Planning & Zoning Commission and a financing plan would be brought to the City Council for action regarding purchase of the property in April.

City of Albany

City Council Planning and Zoning Commission Park & Recreation Commission

Notice of Public Meetings Regarding Potential City Acquisition of Property at 842 Masonic Avenue for Future Expansion of the Albany Senior Center

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, March 10, 2009

TIME AND PLACE: 7:30 P.M. Albany Community Center, 1249 Marin Avenue

PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

MEETING DATE: Thursday, March 12, 2009

TIME AND PLACE: 7:30 P.M. Albany Community Center, 1249 Marin Avenue

CITY COUNCIL

MEETING DATES: Monday, April 6, 2009 to receive recommendations from

TIME AND PLACE: 7:30 P.M. Albany Community Center, 1249 Marin Avenue

Project Description

The subject property is a 3,750.ft. lot with a single-family home located next to the existing Albany Senior Center. The City is exploring the acquisition of the property as a site for future expansion of the Senior Center. The Planning and Zoning Commission, Park and Recreation Commission and City Council will be discussing various elements of the proposal at the meetings indicated above.

If you would like more information about this application, please contact the Albany Community Development Department at (510) 528-5760. Staff reports are available by 12:00 PM on the Friday before the meeting. They may be obtained from the Community Development Department, 979 San Pablo Avenue, phone number (510) 528-5760, or from the Albany Library Reference Desk, 1249 Marin Avenue, phone number (510) 526-3720. Staff reports and supporting documents may also be viewed at www.albanyca.org.

I do hereby certify that the foregoing Notice of Public Hearing was duly processed according to the City of Albany Planning and Zoning Code.

Jeff Bond, Planning Manager

Date of Notice: February 27, 2009

ATTACHMENT # 2



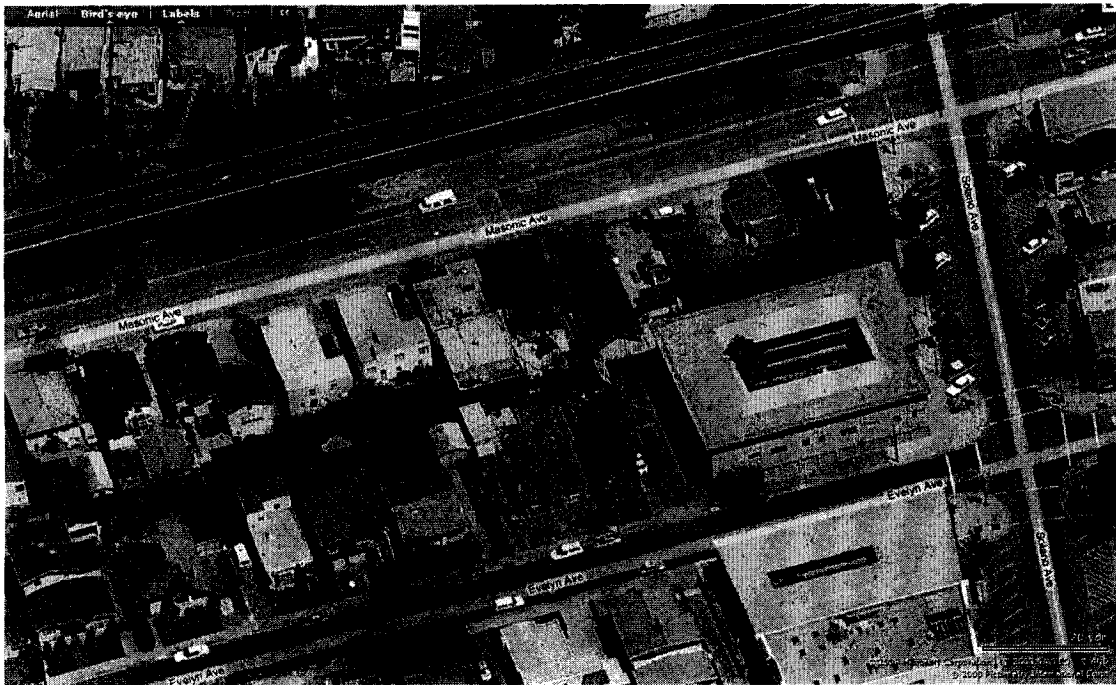
View of Senior Center



842 Masonic



840 Masonic



Aerial photo towards the east



Aerial photo towards the west