

# Council OKs High Density Housing in Hacienda

The Pleasanton City Council approved its first transit oriented development (TOD) projects last week.

The vote was unanimous.

There was no opposition to the two Hacienda Business Park projects from the overflow crowd that filled the council chambers. The only controversy arose over who would build the high density housing, union or non-union labor.

The developer is BRE Prop-

erties, a national affordable housing developer that uses non-union labor.

Both councilmembers and union leaders said that talks aimed at coming to an agreement with BRE over mixing union and non-union labor had failed.

The approval of the housing will help the city to meet court-approved requirements to provide more affordable housing in town. The projects also help

(See HOUSING, page 4)

# HOUSING

(continued from page one)

the city to address the terms of a lawsuit settlement with the state and Urban Habitat that argued Pleasanton wasn't meeting its responsibility to provide housing for lower income residents because it had failed to zone land for housing numbers it had been assigned by ABAG. The lawsuit overturned the voter approved 29,000 unit housing cap.

Both projects approved last week by the council feature mixed use in three to four story buildings. One includes 251 residential units, four live/work units and 5700 square feet of retail space. It is located on 8.4 acres across from the east Pleasanton BART station at the corner of Willow and Owens Drive. The second, on 8.1 acres at the corner of Hacienda Drive and Gibraltar Drive, proposes 247 residential units, four live/work units and about a half acre public park.

Fifteen percent of the housing will be set aside for low income renters.

Site 1 is surrounded by office buildings. Site 2 is across from other housing. The shorter buildings are located opposite the current homes

Councilmember Cindy McGovern was concerned that all of the housing could be built in one year. She wondered if there were a way to meter construction.

Recently approved land rezonings could add 2200 units to the city.

Brian Dolan Director of Community Development, explained, "We don't have the ability to limit growth up to our assigned housing numbers during this planning period. It is likely we could receive applications for four or five other projects. We would be obligated to approve them and grant growth management."

City Manager Nelson Fialho said that the city council could meter development starting in the next planning period, which begins in 2014. "We're catching up now."

Labor leaders and non-union shops weighed in on who would build the newly approved housing in Hacienda.

Labor leaders said that wages paid by BRE would make it unlikely that workers who build the projects could actually live in the housing.

Rob Straker of the Sheetmetal Workers stated, "It's about good local jobs. BRE is insisting that unions compete with outsiders who don't pay the same wages.

John Dalrymple spoke for plumbers, electrical and sheetmetal workers in pointing out that wages paid non-union workers are \$15 to \$20 an hour with no benefits. "This country is losing its middle class. This council can approve policies to encourage a fair deal. You won't have the kind of Pleasanton you want without a middle class."

Councilmember Matt Sullivan asked what sort of policies could be implemented.

Dalrymple explained there could be a clause to require a certain number of apprentices be on the job. "That is totally legal." There could be a requirement that area standard wages be paid.

On the other side of the issue were representatives of several local businesses who are non-union. One owns a painting business. "I like to think we are one of the good contractors who provide good wages and benefits," stated David Thibault.

Ron Cappilla, president of Can-Am Plumbing, said he had run a union shop for 18 years and

non-union for the past 22 years. "We know that if we don't take care of our workers they will go somewhere else."

Both urged the council to improve the projects. That would give them the opportunity to bid on the contracts.

Councilmember Sullivan wondered if there were support to add provisions regarding labor in the conditions of approval. "Everyone wants to talk about workforce housing. We never talk about the workforce. This will likely be a low bid, non union project. We need to start having discussions, to revisit our affordable housing policy to take into consideration how these projects are built." He drew no support from other councilmembers.

However, Councilmember Cheryl Cook-Kallio said that she was badly disappointed that BRE and the unions were unable to come to an agreement. "We all want jobs that pay well. Workers would like to be able to pay their bills without looking for help from the public. The market should drive it. However, in a bad economy, the wages are driven low, forcing people to rely on public services to live. Those

subsidies come out of taxpayer dollars. Companies have a right to make a profit. Workers have a right to make a living. There needs to be a balance."

Councilmember Jerry Thorne commented, "All workers have an equal opportunity to work on these projects. That means an open bidding process. The lowest bidder should be able to obtain the job."

Mayor Jennifer Hosterman, stated, "I too am concerned about the economy and supporting people in finding employment. I don't believe this is the appropriate project for a union-non union agreement. There are other projects that will come forward that will be more appropriate. Be aware, we live on some of the most expensive land in the world. Because of that, trying to put together a project like this is very difficult."

All of the councilmembers, including Cindy McGovern, said they were pleased with how the two projects turned out. A Hacienda Task Force spent over a year developing design guidelines to be used for TOD in Hacienda Business Park.