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High density, multi-story apartment project OK'd for California Center
Five buildings plus retail center set for Owens-Rosewood corner

by Jeb Bing

A new multi-story, high density apartment project and adjoining retail center was approved Tuesday night by the Pleasanton City Council for a section of California Center that has until now been one of the city's major office centers.

Developer Mark English and his Pleasant Partners group will build two-, three- and four-story buildings and a two-building retail center on a portion of the office building site at Rosewood and Owens drives, which they have acquired from California Center, formerly called CarrAmerica.

The site is one of a number of properties rezoned for high density housing as part of an agreement between Pleasanton and state housing authorities as part of a court settlement to provide more affordable housing in the city.

However, it's the "affordable" part of Tuesday night's approval that was controversial with the city Housing Commission and affordable housing advocates here arguing that Pleasanton Partners' plan shows that mostly market rate, not affordable, apartment units will be built. Of the 305 studio and one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments planned for the development, just under 50 will be in the "affordable" classification, well under the 15-20% rate once required under the city's now-invalid inclusionary zoning ordinance.

Still, council members praised the design of the complex and the developer's plan for large open spaces, playgrounds and sports areas between the buildings. The project, on 8.4 acres of 61-acre California Center property, will include five residential buildings in what attorney Marty Inderbitzen, who represents Pleasanton Partners, described as stepped-height construction, with the two-story buildings facing the streets and the taller buildings in the back.

The two retail buildings will total 7,520 square feet and will diagonally face the Owens-Rosewood intersection, across from Archstone and Hacienda apartment complexes and Red Robin Restaurant in the Walmart store retail center.

Interior recreation areas and other amenities will include a fitness center, community room, bicycle repair shop, business center and two common rooms in a 4-1/2 story "podium" building. A pool, barbecue area, bocce ball court and children's play areas are also planned in the complex.

A total of 489 resident and guest parking spaces will be provided in the complex with at least one covered parking space assigned to each apartment.

To accommodate the apartment and retail complex, 1,242 of California Center's current 3,915 parking spaces will be removed with the developer building 1,459 parking spaces in a new multi-story garage and additional surface parking near the I-580 side of the center. The Pleasant Partners development will take much of the surface parking lot and the sloping green grassy area adjacent to Owens Drive.

With the Planning Commission's and now the City Council's unanimous approval of the Pleasant Partners development, work can get under way as soon as final design work is completed and building permits issued. The project is expected to be finished in 2014.

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