

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 15, 2019

TO: Chairman and Members
Community Redevelopment Agency

FROM: Leif J. Ahnell, C.P.A., C.G.F.O.
Executive Director

SUBJECT: Camino Square, IDA No. CRP-16-02, located at 171 Camino Real

At its January 7, 2019 meeting, the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) reviewed the "Camino Square" project generally located on approximately 9.133 acres at 171 West Camino Real ("Property"). Specifically, the application seeks approval of a two (2)-phase development including the demolition of existing improvements including four (4) vacant, one (1)-story retail buildings totaling approximately 73,580 square feet and an existing parking lot, and construction of new improvements as follows: in Phase 1, a total of 350 residential units in two (2) eight (8)-story residential buildings totaling 460,129 square feet and a parking structure totaling 271,493 square feet; and, in Phase 2, two (2) one (1)-story retail buildings totaling 37,399 square feet ("Project").

At the hearing, as part of the CRA's discussion of the site plan, the Board requested that staff analyze the conversion of retail square footage to 145,833 square feet of Office Equivalent ("O. E.s") residential (350 units) for the Project and to report back at the continuation of the Public Hearing, which is scheduled for April 8, 2019. The following analysis provides background and discussion on elements of the Amended Downtown Plan (adopted in January 1995 – the "Plan") and the provisions of the Downtown Development Order (Ordinance No. 4035 – "4035") that are relevant to the consideration of the conversion of O. E.s development for the residential use for the Project. The fundamental considerations for the CRA Board are whether or not the conversion, or the amount of conversion, is appropriate and in keeping with the Plan and 4035.

CONVERSION OF USES

Allocation of Uses in Subarea G

Background:

The Downtown Plan provides that 4035 permits the conversion of uses within subareas and transfer of uses among the subareas, subject to an assessment of the impacts. No residential O.E.s were originally allocated to Subarea G pursuant to 4035, therefore, a conversion is required for residential units to be approved in Subarea G. (The same happens to be true for Subarea A.)

Both subareas G and A (which have no authorized development for residential or hotel use allocated in 4035, thus requiring a conversion for such uses to be developed) are west of the FEC railroad and are thus separated from the “heart” of downtown. The railroad, which serves as a barrier and discourages convenient pedestrian linkage to the heart of downtown was likely a factor in the original allocation of authorized development. Subarea G’s authorized development (without conversions or transfers) is Retail (High) and Office. Its location logically supports those uses (which were already developed at the time 4035 was adopted) as a commercial destination for the non-downtown residential areas to the west, east, and south (consistent with the goals of the Downtown Plan) and the rest of Downtown. (The same is generally true of Subarea A as well, with the addition/substitution of Institutional Uses.) Subarea G is different from the Downtown area east of the FEC railroad, as the original allocation of authorized development recognized.

The Plan, in its discussion of the Subareas and the allocation of uses within the Subareas, notes that the Subareas “more clearly define the Downtown Redevelopment Area by identifying land use themes within the Redevelopment Area.” In the case of Subarea G, the preferred land uses (the “theme” for the Subarea) were Office and Retail (High), consistent with the Subarea’s underlying function as neighborhood serving retail for the multi-and single-family areas to the north, west, and south, as well as the rest of Downtown.

Because retail uses are always permitted anywhere in the Downtown, pursuant to 4035, it is clear that they are important to the overall success of the Downtown as part of the “rich mixture of uses” contemplated in the Downtown Boca Raton Vision (Exhibit 1 to the Plan). Exhibit 1 also notes that the mixture of uses is to be “linked and orchestrated by a renewed focus on the street and pedestrian experience.” The Downtown Vision discussion in Section II of the Plan notes restaurants and shopping (i.e. retail) as key components of the vision element of Choice.

Discussion:

For Camino Square the amount of on-site retail is being reduced from 73,580 square feet to 37,399 square feet, a 50.82 percent overall reduction. The eliminated retail is being replaced with residential through the conversion process in 4035. While the conversion may be approved by the CRA, it may not be wholly advisable, given the loss of retail availability in an area intended by the Plan to serve as a retail and office hub. It is pertinent to consider whether the conversion to residential, as well as the amount of residential proposed, is appropriate overall and properly balanced within the Subarea and for the downtown as a whole, which, according to the Downtown Vision, is to be a community resource and function within the context of the larger community.

Urban Design of the Project

Background:

Exhibit 2 to the Plan, Urban Design Criteria, provides criteria applicable to each project within the Downtown and the Downtown as a whole. Criterion 1, Visionary Quality, provides as follows:

- Each project must be rooted in a visionary concept.
- Transcend conventional approach in terms of function, physical organization, architecture, and open space.

Discussion:

In the case of Camino Square, the original proposed site plan was a two (2) phased project and 100 percent retailspace. . Although the Applicant has worked with staff to improve the Project design beyond that which was originally submitted, the Project remains basically two (2) developments: one (1) residential and one (1) retail. The residential portion, on its own, addresses the Visionary Quality criterion in its site design, yet the retail portion is more or less conventional suburban shopping center in design, with a large parking field dominating the site and no substantive attempt to transcend a conventional approach to function, physical organization, and open space. The architectural treatment of the retail is presently unknown. Whether the Project, as proposed, meets this Criterion should be evaluated when considering the conversion from retail to residential.

Background:

Criterion 3 of the Urban Design Criteria, Unity, provides as follows:

- Each project must relate to the whole.
- Enhance the order and richness of the downtown.
- The whole is represented on the ground plane.

Discussion:

Because of its geographic location, the Project is separated from the rest of the Downtown. It is not clear that the reduction of retail and introduction of residential in this area enhances the order and richness of the downtown, particularly because the retail portion of the Project is limited and it is not clear how well it will serve the residential portion of the Project as well as the non-commercial development that surrounds it. Because the retail portion of the Project is not fully defined, it is not clear how that portion relates to the residential or Downtown as a whole. Whether the Project, as proposed, meets this Criterion should be evaluated when considering the conversion from retail to residential.

Background:

The Plan's Land Use and Urban Design Goal is to "revitalize the Downtown Area through a variety of land use policies and urban design guidelines intended to enhance the retail, office, residential, cultural and recreational character of the area." Land Use and Urban Design Policy 1.2 provides as follows: "Encourage mixed retail, commercial, residential, and public uses throughout the area."

For Retail uses, the Plan notes that a “strong retail component in Downtown is fundamental to developing the strong mixed use character necessary for redevelopment,” and Land Use Goal 1 (Retail) calls for strengthening the retail component of Downtown by “attracting additional retail anchors” and by “broadening the range of available retail goods and services.” Land Use Policy 2.3 calls for encouraging the location of larger tenants and uses which will serve as anchors for retail development or broaden the range of retail goods in keeping with the character of downtown Boca Raton.

Discussion:

The Camino Square Project’s conversion of retail to residential, in effect, reduces the range of available retail goods and services and may weaken the strong retail component necessary for a strong mixed use redevelopment. The Applicant has indicated that it has been difficult to find interested retail tenants for the Project, and adding residential may spur retail interest in the site. It is pertinent to consider whether the conversion required for the Project, as proposed, provides an appropriate balance of uses on the site and within the Downtown and whether the conversion is in keeping with the policies in the Plan.

Background:

Criterion 4 of the Urban Design Criteria of the Plan, Definition of Positive Urban Space, provides that

- All projects and building must create and define positive, meaningful, visually exciting usable urban spaces.

Urban Design Policy 1.1 requires the development of a “continuous and inviting system of pedestrian streets.” Urban Design Policy 1.6 calls for projects to “emphasize façades as major elements of the overall street-scape.” A positive pedestrian experience is a fundamental goal of the Plan, and the relationship of projects to adjacent streets and sidewalks is a key element of achieving that goal. Urban Design Policy 1.7 encourages the “development of vistas and views as part of major projects.”

Discussion:

The retail component of the Camino Square Project is, as discussed above, a more or less traditional suburban shopping center in design, with a large parking field which serves as the main visual element from SW 3rd Avenue, the principal street for the retail parcel. The Project does not appear to have considered alternative design options to invigorate the pedestrian realm on SW 3rd Avenue, such as an appropriately scaled façade flanking SW 3rd Avenue. The design of the residential parcel itself provides a vista to the east between the buildings, but this vista is not connected to SW 3rd Avenue because of the design of the retail parcel. In addition to consideration of whether the amount of retail on the site is in keeping with the Plan, the design of the proposed retail should also be evaluated to determine its compliance with the principles of the Plan.

Staff Recommendations

Staff has also provided the Applicant with a number of suggestions for improved site design and to address some of the concerns that have been raised through the public hearing process. Many of these suggestions have been provided to the Applicant throughout the development review process, either in the form of formal written comments or in meetings. They are as follows:

- No phasing (build it in one [1] phase);
- Vertical integration of the retail and residential;
- Engage Northwest 3rd Avenue with a use directly fronting the street, such as retail or townhomes;
- Place the preponderance of residential development along the northern portion of the property adjacent to existing residential;
- Revise the design of the north-south driveway to place “street trees” between the travel lanes and the street (objections regarding location of utilities are unconvincing, as the site is proposed to be completely redeveloped). Also consider redesigning the parking to place “on-street parking” on one or both sides of this driveway);
- Redesign the site plan such that the north-south driveway includes a stub-out to the north, to facilitate a potential future cross-connection to the north when properties to the north redevelop Redesign Northwest 3rd Avenue / the area fronting Northwest 3rd Avenue to make the street more walkable, i.e. place street trees between the travel lanes and the (relocated) sidewalk, consider the placement of on-street parking along the property’s frontage with Northwest 3rd Avenue
- Redesign the parking area of the commercial portion of the Project to reduce the number of vehicular access points to the main east-west driveway, so that the driveway looks and functions more like a street;
- Redesign the commercial portion of the Project to place buildings to front along BOTH sides (rather than just one side) of both the north-south and east-west driveways;
- All trees along both sides of the driveways should be SHADE TREES – NOT PALMS; and
- Orient the residential buildings according to the east-west access drive to the south (i.e. the street) rather than according to the railroad tracks (which places the buildings at an angle to the street, thus weakening their relationship to the street).

To date, the Applicant has elected not to further revise the proposed site plan.

Applicant’s Proposed Intersection Improvements

The applicant submitted three proposed alternatives for intersection improvements and analysis, demonstrating the degree of traffic improvement on the west side of the intersection of Camino Real and Dixie Highway. Currently, east bound, one (1) 10-foot wide left turn lane, and two (2) 11-foot wide thru lanes (including a right turn thru lane) and two (2) 11-foot wide west bound thru lanes are provided at the intersection. Bike lanes and sidewalks are also provided. The three (3) alternatives are as follows:

Alternative 1:

The improvement consists off adding a right turn lane in the eastbound direction. This alternative provides 10 foot left-turn and right-turn lanes and 11 foot thru-lanes in the eastbound as well as two (2) thru-lanes westbound; one (1) 10-foot wide lane and one (1) 11-foot wide lane. Bike lanes and sidewalks remain as existing.

The operational analyses show that the overall intersection delay during the AM peak hour will improve from 98.5 sec/veh to 88.4 sec/veh, an improvement of approximately 10%. The eastbound delay will improve from 109.1 sec/veh to 74.4 sec/veh, an improvement of approximately 32%.

During the PM Peak hour, the overall intersection delay will improve from 123.4 sec/veh to 98.5 sec/veh, an improvement of approximately 20%. The eastbound delay will improve from 162.5 sec/veh to 79.0 sec/veh, an improvement of approximately 51%.

The existing eastbound queue blocks the intersection of Camino Real and SW 2nd Avenue. This alternative shows that the queue will still block the intersection.

Alternative 2:

The improvement consists off adding an additional left turn lane and a right turn lane in the eastbound direction. This alternative provides two (2) 10-foot wide left turn lanes, one (1) 10-foot right turn lane and 11 foot thru lanes in the eastbound as well as two (2) thru lanes westbound; one (1) 10-foot wide lane and one (1) 11-foot wide lane. Existing bike lanes will be removed as part of this improvement. Sidewalks will remain.

The operational analyses show that the overall intersection delay during the AM peak hour will improve from 98.5 sec/veh to 85.3 sec/veh, an improvement of approximately 13%. The eastbound delay will improve from 109.1 sec/veh to 68.2 sec/veh, an improvement of approximately 38%.

During the PM Peak hour, the overall intersection delay will improve from 123.4 sec/veh to 86.7 sec/veh, an improvement of approximately 30%. The eastbound delay will improve from 162.5 sec/veh to 70.9 sec/veh, an improvement of approximately 56%.

The existing eastbound queue blocks the intersection of Camino Real and SW 2nd Avenue. This alternative shows that the queue will **not** block the intersection.

Alternative 3:

This alternative proposes the same lane geometry as Alternative 2 above. However, sidewalks on both sides of the road will be demolished and replaced with an 11.5-foot wide shared use pathway on the south side of Camino Real.

As the lane geometry is similar to Alternative 2 above, improvements in operations are similar.

Conditions of Approval

Should the Board approve Alternative 2, staff recommends two (2) new conditions of approval in the IDA, Condition Nos. 5.z and aa), as follows:

- z) Obtain approval of design plans and necessary permits from Palm Beach County for all work in the Camino Real right-of-way to modify the west approach geometry at the Camino Real/ Dixie Highway intersection. The work shall include:

- i. Two (2) 10-foot-wide eastbound left-turn lanes;
- ii. One (1) 10-foot-wide eastbound right-turn lane;
- iii. Two (2) 11-foot-wide eastbound thru lanes;
- iv. Two (2) westbound thru lanes; one (1) 10-foot lane and one (1) 11-foot lane;
- v. A 9.5 feet wide median;
- vi. Relocation of FEC gate arms;
- vii. Minimum six (6) feet-wide sidewalk ; and,
- viii. Curb cut ramps to be designed and constructed conforming to FDOT Index 304.

Failure to obtain this permit shall make the site plan approval for this Project null and void.

- aa) Obtain approval of design plans and necessary permits from the City Staff Responsible for Public Works Review to:
 - i. Modify traffic signal according to new lane configuration at the intersection of Camino Real and Dixie Highway;
 - ii. Construct a southbound left turn lane with a four (4)-foot wide median at the intersection of Camino Real and SW 3rd Avenue;
 - iii. Construct a minimum five (5)-foot wide sidewalk on both sides of SW 3rd Avenue;
 - iv. Construct curb cut ramps conforming to FDOT Index 304; and,
 - v. Modify traffic signal according to new lane configuration at the intersection of Camino Real and SW 3rd Avenue.

Execute and deliver to the City for recordation, along with applicable fees, dedicated right-of-way along SW 3rd Avenue to construct the northbound right turn lane at the driveway in a form acceptable to the City Attorney. The right-of-way shall be conveyed at the applicant's sole expense and in manner acceptable to the City Attorney.

And 8. b) and c)

- b) Complete all construction and have it accepted by the appropriate jurisdiction(s) and obtain approval for all improvements shown on the approved Public Works Review plan.
- c) Complete the construction of improvements described in Condition z and aa and have such improvements accepted by the appropriate jurisdiction(s).

Summary and Conclusion

Staff and the CRA's urban design consultant, the Mellgren Planning Group, previously determined that the Camino Square Project meets the minimum standards of the Plan and 4035. As was discussed with the CRA Board during the public hearing in January, the issue of the appropriateness of the conversion of retail to residential for this Project in Subarea G (where no residential use was originally contemplated or allocated) was not considered during the prior staff and consultant review. Pursuant to the CRA Board's direction, staff has analyzed the conversion, as discussed above.

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