

Shape Our Fremont

Where Fremont residents can learn about shaping proposed housing developments...

The Power of Participation

Wouldn't it be great if every resident of Fremont had the opportunity to comment on what they liked and disliked about a new housing development long before the City made a final decision on approval or disapproval? That way, residents could express their concerns about the size and height of the proposed project, and about how it fit with the surrounding neighborhood, and about how it would impact traffic and schools. And, if enough people expressed similar concerns, the City Planning Department would be able to work with the developer to make changes.

Well, you already have that opportunity - you just have to jump in and participate.

Every Comment Counts

Over the past few years, concerned residents have made comments about various proposed housing projects and gotten results. In some cases, the heights of the proposed buildings have been reduced or the buildings have been moved back from the property line to make them more compatible with nearby buildings. In other cases, suggestions to rearrange the building layout have resulted in a reduction in massing or the preservation of heritage trees.

And in a few cases, comments from a large number of concerned neighbors about a project being "too big" have persuaded the developer to significantly reduce the number of dwellings on the site. It can be done.

Often, important changes have resulted from the comments of just a single resident. Every person has a different perspective, and every comment counts.

But Don't Wait

The best way to express your concerns about a specific new housing development is to contact the assigned staff planner directly. Don't wait until the developer holds a community meeting, or the project is presented to the Planning Commission or City Council. All new housing developments are open for public comments as soon as the City assigns a planner, and that's when your comments can have the most effect.

Email is the easiest way to contact the planner, but you can also use postal mail. As long as your comments are in writing, they will be kept as part of the public correspondence file for a particular development. You can write as many times and on as many subjects as you like on any project.

After you have written, it is best if you can attend the Planning Commission and City Council meetings when the specific development is heard to express your concerns in person.

Hot Topics

There are several proposed developments and related issues that have raised significant concerns and are especially hot right now.

Walnut Residences. A proposal to build a massive apartment complex at the corner of Walnut Avenue and Guardino Drive resulted in a great deal of public opposition. After the initial round of

meetings, in which residents said the proposed urban density of 70 dwelling units per acre was too high, the original proposal for 882 units in five-story buildings was reduced to 670 units in four-story buildings. Residents say that number is still too high and they are actively pushing for further reduction. Concerns over traffic, parking, height, and community character were also noted. This project is still under review, and comments are encouraged.

Centerville Junction. A proposal to tear down 10 existing old homes and a small commercial center along Peralta Boulevard and replace them with 53 three-story townhouses is nearing the end of its formal review. The primary concern is the units are too close to the sidewalk and give an urban-like feeling that is out of character with the area. Another concern is the loss of the older, more-affordable houses. Review by the Planning Commission is tentatively scheduled for April 28.

Privacy Guidelines. What can you do if someone wants to tear down a single-story house next to yours and build a two-story house with windows that overlook your backyard? That's the issue the City is trying to address with a new set of privacy guidelines that are scheduled to be presented to the Planning Commission on March 24. One of the major concerns is that guidelines are recommendations and are not legally enforceable, so there is no way to ensure privacy. Public comments are welcome at the meeting.

To learn more about all the proposed housing developments in Fremont, and the names and email addresses of the planners assigned to each project, go to
www.ShapeOurFremont.com