

Shape Our Fremont

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

Quirks of the General Plan

On Thursday August 25th, the Planning Commission will review two General Plan Amendment Prioritization Requests (GPA-PR). One of them reminded us of the many odd things in the 2011 General Plan that we've encountered while delving into residential planning. This article isn't really about specific developments, but rather the things in the General Plan and Zoning that make us say "Huh?"

Hillside Overlay

The Canyon View GPA-PR is asking to remove the Hillside Residential Overlay that is currently on the nearly two-acre parcel at 243 Morrison Canyon Road. This parcel is on the west side of the old railroad tracks and is essentially flat. A development had been approved for that lot back in 1991. It proposed to finish off two cul-de-sacs and build 8 single-family houses adjacent to and similar to the houses on Queso Place and Espada Place. Yet with all this information, the 2011 General Plan designated this parcel as being within a Hillside Residential Overlay. That designation limits the number of allowable houses to four (2.3 units per net acre) because that 1991 development had never been built. How did a parcel on the west side of the tracks with no slope ever get that overlay designation?

Planned District in TOD

There has been a lot of talk about the Walnut Residences project proposed for the nearly 14-acre Guardino homestead. That parcel was given an Urban Residential Land Use designation in the 2011 General Plan. Neighbors ask why that happened when it is surrounded by Medium Residential areas. However, the quirky part has to do with it being zoned a Planned District before 2013 and being in a Transit Oriented Development Overlay District (TOD). Such parcels are not subject to TOD regulations. The General Plan Land Use Diagram simply shows the area as Urban Residential in a TOD with no indication of its special status. The school district, water district, and City housing forecasters just see "Urban-TOD" and make their forecasts from that designation. Why isn't there a special color legend for undeveloped "Pre-2013 Planned Districts in a TOD" similar to the "Study Area" and "Area of Interest" designations?

Old vs. New Designation

During the Staff presentation to the Planning Commission at the Centerville Junction hearing, it was noted that the parcel at 3498 Peralta Blvd., where the historic Gould House sits, was designated as Residential in the old 1991 General Plan and yet it is designated as Commercial in the 2011 General Plan. Huh?

TOD Around Future Station

There is a circular one-half-mile TOD around where an Irvington BART station may some day be built on Osgood Rd. at Washington Blvd. The City specifically decided to place the overlay around the, at that time, unfunded station site. This was to encourage the creation of a transit district that would allow for more dense housing and hopefully encourage pedestrians. Much of Osgood Rd. within the TOD is designated as Urban Residential even though it is over a half-mile from Washington Blvd. and almost a mile from shopping and services. The City has already approved one five-story condominium project on Osgood over a quarter-mile from the proposed station. Others are in the planning pipeline. Why is the City already approving five-story Urban-density projects in this TOD when the station is not yet built? Why are TOD's circular with no thought to the distance of the actual routes that exist for pedestrians?

Six-Stories Around The Hub

The Hub is designated as a City Center - Urban Neighborhood Zone. The first three stories of new buildings must be near or at the sidewalk and the massing must be toward the front of buildings. Buildings can be six stories and up to 75 feet tall. Roofs, parapets, and decorative finials can rise 110 feet above the grade. A six-story residential tower filling the entire Union 76 lot at the corner of Mowry Ave. and Argonaut Way has recently been proposed in a project called The Argonaut. Is that sort of tower in keeping with the character of The Hub? Shouldn't the peripheral of The Hub be exempt from such tall buildings right on the outer sidewalks?

Land Use Designations

General Plan Amendments require the approval of the current landowner. Did the City ask all the owners when they adopted the 2011 General Plan whether they agree to what is indicated on the Land Use map? Look for your lot on the "Land Use Diagram" of the 2011 General Plan posted at www.fremont.gov/398/General-Plan And remember that the Land Use Designation is separate from the Zoning (i.e. Residential-Low Land Use might be zoned R-1-6, R-1-8, or even a Planned District zone.)

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