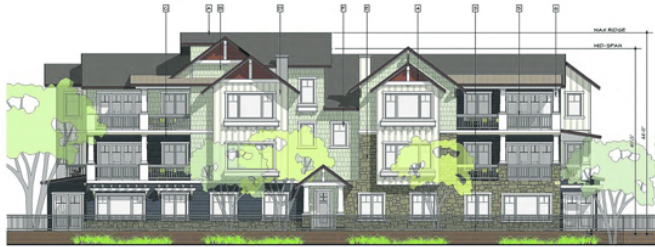


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## After Long Delay, Woodbury Condos Coming to Lafayette

By Cathy Tyson



Calling it thoughtful design on a human scale, Planning Commissioner Karen Maggio and her colleagues voted unanimously to approve a revised version of the upscale Woodbury Condominiums at the former site of the Hillside Motel behind the Veterans Memorial Building.

Proposed in 2007, the ambitious original project had 80 condominium units, later reduced to 65 in four three-story buildings with underground parking. Although it was approved in 2008, the housing market took a nose dive and plans were put on a lengthy hold. The recently approved revised project is smaller and will contain 56 residential condominium units in seven buildings that follow the contour of the hillside on the two and a half acre site. The majority of units, 42 to be exact, will be three-bedroom condominiums, with the remaining 14 to be two-bedroom; the average square footage is slated to be 1,800 square feet with generous private outdoor areas.

Developer Matt Branagh sees the target market for these units as mature Lafayette residents whose kids have grown and gone. "Empty nesters have deep roots in the area and are looking for a high quality, fun place to enjoy

Image provided

their hard work," said Branagh. "The Woodbury's luxury units will offer them the freedom to entertain the family for Thanksgiving and the next day, lock the door and go to the desert for a month, worry-free. It's a vision my late father created and my brother and I hope to carry forward."

As part of the project, there will be improvements made to the EBMUD aqueduct right-of-way that lies directly south of the project, adjacent to the Veterans Hall and associated parking lot. Plans for the strip of land that contain large water pipes include a handicap accessible multi-use pathway, upgraded landscaping, and public art. Another component of the Woodbury project is 18 affordable units for low- and moderate-income residents that will be located off-site, but within downtown Lafayette.

City staff commented that although the project has been significantly revised, the applicant has not abandoned attention to detail. Lafayette-based architect Scott Thomsen of Ward-Young Architects is responsible for the revised design that incorporates shingled buildings with some Craftsman elements.

Thomsen said he enjoys working with Branagh Development. "They are the perfect client; they respect good design and always strive to create the best product possible. When I first sat down with them to look at this project, they came up with an innovative and much needed housing concept to fill a niche in the area."

Together they focused on creating a project that has all the advantages of single family residences, but none of the disadvantages. "We have developed large single story units that share no walls with other condominiums and have windows on three sides," said Thomsen. "We strove to make the units feel private and separate with some breathing room between neighbors; to that end we incorporated individual garages, large private outdoor terraces and even included personal foyers off the elevators. We believe all this attention to detail will create a truly unique project."

He's leaving his imprint on the city's west end- Thompson is the brains behind the skinny Fresh Connection building just down Mt. Diablo Boulevard and the soon to be constructed Eco Vive West office building that will occupy the corner of Risa Road and Mt. Diablo.

Design Review commissioners commented on the evolution of the project, praising its livability and scale. Commissioner and architect Ken Hertel noted the "fantastic rebirth and salvation of this project" adding, "it will certainly dress up a hillside that has been lacking for some time."

Wait - There's More

A new Branagh building across the street

Looking for final approval in early January, Matt Branagh of Branagh Development and architect Scott Thomsen have teamed up again just across the way from the Woodbury to produce a nearly 10,000 square foot, two-story medical office building on the corner of Risa Road and Mt. Diablo Boulevard, called EcoVive West.

"It's a blend of modern and historic agricultural design," said Thomsen of Ward Young Architects. "We envisioned blending Lafayette's past style with Lafayette's current architectural vernacular. We have also worked hard to unite the building with the surrounding landscape, keeping it as natural and untouched as possible."

With the grand Veteran's Memorial Building right across the street, keeping this structure slightly subdued was part of the plan. A recent city staff report noted, "The applicant incorporated a number of mechanisms to break-up the bulk and mass of the buildings, such as utilizing a variety of materials, overhangs and windows and doors of varying shapes and sizes. If all goes according to plan, the developer hopes that construction will start this coming

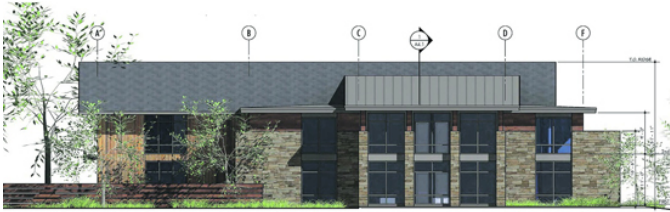


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