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KB Condos Almost Ready to Break Ground

By Cathy Tyson



Image provided

building materials, balcony design and improving the connection with the public realm. Part of the site fronts Happy Valley Creek, so the city was concerned about clearly identifying what will be a public space with amenities, along with an easily identifiable walkway that links city sidewalks to the nearby BART station. The developer will use the same reddish decorative pavers found on downtown sidewalks to send that message.

The process to get to this point has seen some delays, and at the onset, a fair amount of public comment. KB Home filed an application for a specific plan amendment in 2010. The resulting zoning change amended the BART block specific plan for a building over three stories and 35 feet in height; it also included a land use change from office to residential use.

Then came rejection. Public hearings were held in 2012, and in June the Design Review Commission could not make the findings to support the project. Commissioners were clear that the applicant should consider a number of its recommendations that could lead to future approval - primarily, shrinking the building.

A few months later, the Planning Commission conducted more public hearings, finally voting to adopt the denial of the building application, again finding that the building was too tall.

Following that, the City Council, in October, 2012, received revised architectural plans showing that the top story of the building had been eliminated. Still, concerns lingered about the aesthetics of the building, so the council referred the revised plans back to the planning and design review commissions for comment. A sticking point with many citizens during the hearings was the height of the building, which in its final iteration is 55 feet tall, after the developer agreed to take off the top story - which is shorter than the adjacent Town Center brown shingled apartments. KB describes the height as "three and four stories over podium parking."

Ultimately the new lower height, while still substantial, was approved. "The increase in height is compensated by the provision of three public outdoor spaces, a landscaped area between the building and Happy Valley Creek, a new pedestrian corridor along the south building facade and a community park where these two spaces meet," states the City Council resolution that was adopted on Nov. 26, 2012. KB Home did not reply to request for comment on when ground-breaking will occur.

After four meetings and a site visit finalizing design details, KB Home is squared away to receive the final approval on design development for the project it has been working on since 2010. This structure will house 69 condominium units on a 1.5 acre parcel at the terminus of Dewing Avenue - now the parking area just behind Panda Express.

"This is the last approval from the City," said planning and building services manager Niroop Srivatsa. "The next steps are to fulfill all the conditions of approval and submit plans for a building permit." A resolution is slated to be finalized for the design development plans, with conditions, at the Sept. 22 meeting of the Design Review Commission.

Hurdles for this particular milestone focused on architectural and landscape plans which include vehicle and pedestrian access, public art, windows,

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