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Testing the Waters for More Condos on West End

By Cathy Tyson



Proposed Woodbury Highlands project in west Lafayette Image provided

Is Lafayette ready for another condominium complex? A potential project, still in its infancy, called Woodbury Highlands on the west end of town has been proposed and is in the process of garnering feedback from the city to see if it's feasible.

Branagh Development is considering demolishing the existing white building just up the hill from the Woodbury luxury condominium project, and has an option on an adjacent parcel. "We appreciate your insight and advice," said Matt Branagh at a recent Design Review Commission meeting, explaining that the team is still trying to see if purchasing the second parcel makes sense.

The two lots' combined total 6.5 acres back up to Highway 24, and are bordered to the south by the EBMUD aqueduct right of way, with the new, slim Fresh Connection building tucked into a sliver of street front on Mt. Diablo Boulevard.

Because the site is on a fairly significant slope, it quickly became apparent that any design would be challenging, and commissioners were blunt - they didn't want a linear strip of structures on the one substantially flat section of the property near the freeway. Instead they suggested inspiration from the hill towns of Greece and Italy to integrate the topography into the design plan.

To satisfy the affordable housing obligation for this project, if it's approved, Branagh proposed developing workforce housing to share a portion of the city-owned property with a parking lot at 949 Moraga Road, across from the old library.

Branagh acknowledged the difficult site and expressed concern that sometimes bigger projects mean bigger problems, although there is some "synergy" with the two parcels that share a driveway to Mt. Diablo Boulevard.

Andre Ptaszynski, design review commissioner and seasoned architect, sees the potential of the site, advising that the bigger the project, the bigger potential for success. "I bet you could make it work," he said, adding, "Good design can mitigate some of those concerns." Frequent partner on Branagh projects, Scott Thomsen of Lafayette-based Ward Young Architects, will have to put his imagination to work.

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