

## "Massive" expansion of Milpitas Square recommended

by Ian Bauer, Milpitas Post

Posted: 11/03/2010 02:58:20 PM PDT

Updated: 11/03/2010 02:58:20 PM PDT

A 175,000-square-foot mixed use retail and residential expansion plan at Milpitas Square near Barber Lane is being likened to San Jose's Santana Row.

Milpitas Planning Commission voted Oct. 27 to approve a master plan, development agreement, conditional use permit and environmental impact report to allow for 900 residential units, retail, open air plazas and a promenade, multiple high-rise buildings and a possible hotel on approximately 17 acres.

"This project is a massive project," Sheldon Ah Sing, the city's senior planner, told commissioners.

Located at 198 Barber Court, Ah Sing said the future project would expand the current 162,000-square-foot Milpitas Square bounded by state Route 237, Interstate 880 and Barber Lane and the eastern terminus of Bellew Drive. The existing land use includes two hotels, the former Billings Chevrolet dealership (now proposed for the \$500 million, 18-story high rise Landmark Tower at 600 Barber Lane) and Cisco Systems Inc.

San Francisco-based architecture firm Van Meter

Williams Pollack, representing Milpitas Square owner Anthony Morici, proposes the future phased development of the site into a mixed-use project over a 25-year period. Through phasing, the developer proposes up to six multi-level buildings from eight stories to perhaps 20 stories respectively parking structures, new streets, and streetscapes and courtyards similar to those found in Santana Row, city reports state.

"What this project does if it's approved

is it changes the (land use) designation from commercial to mixed use for that whole corner... (and) would be a mixed use, very high density project," Ah Sing said.

The development agreement requires that over 25 years a minimum of 155,000 square feet of commercial space be maintained after each phase until the build out phase whereby a minimum of 167,500 square feet of retail space shall be built. In addition, under the 900 dwelling unit residential portion of the project, 384 one-bedroom units, 480 two-bedroom units and 36 three-bedroom units may be offered. But the agreement also provides an option to build a 380-room hotel in lieu of 214 dwelling units, reports state.

Also, according to Ah Sing, the project is in close proximity to Pacific Gas & Electric Co. natural gas transmission pipelines and that an open disclosure would need to be made to any future developers about the location of those lines.

"The project is considered within the provisions of the zoning ordinance and the general plan," Ah Sing said, noting the project's EIR was drafted and circulated and that it identified traffic and air quality as significant impacts. "Most of those could be mitigated, but there are some overriding considerations that need to be considered."



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At the planning commission meeting, Milpitas Square owner Morici called the new project "fascinating."

"And we have a successful center and we're trying to look forward to the future," Morici said.

Morici suggested Milpitas Square, which is home to a 99 Ranch Market among other largely Asian-themed stores and restaurants, would increase in size and essentially undergo some "remodeling" and "re-staging."

"We have before you a mixed-use plan," Morici said. "The plan is a process where you will see living quarters, shopping quarters, entertainment as well as people being able to work close by."

Afterward, planning commissioners including Chair Cliff Williams said he wanted to see the project address certain concerns including parking, street configuration and finding ways to conceal roof top electronic equipment.

Williams also wanted to see the developer and city staff work together with the area around 99 Ranch to submit a shopping cart master plan so that abandoned shopping carts are promptly retrieved. But in the end, the planning commission looked forward to seeing the project move forward.

"Congratulations, thank you for bringing such a nice project to our community," Williams said after the vote.

Milpitas City Council is expected to review the Milpitas Square project for final approval at a future meeting.

Planning commissioners Noella Tabladillo, Mark Tiernan and alternate member John Luk were absent.

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