

Case File Number: PUD02-217, TTM7396

April 14, 2004

Location:	Siena Hill (off of Keller Avenue, between Greenridge Drive and Rilea Way); 040A-3457-033-01
Proposal:	To construct 32 attached single-family dwellings on 32 lots, 103 off-street parking spaces, and a private road. In addition, 17 parking spaces on Keller Avenue would be available for guests and the general public.
Applicant:	Edward Patmont / (925) 946-0583
Owners:	Hillside Homes Group Inc.
Planning Permits Required:	A Planned Unit Development (PUD), a Tentative Tract Map (TTM), and Minor Variances for height and minimum separation of retaining walls and for maximum percentage of front yard paving; Design Review.
General Plan:	Detached Unit Residential
Zoning:	R-50 Medium Density Residential
Environmental Determination:	An environmental review application has been filed. A determination has been made that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be prepared. A Notice of Preparation to prepare an EIR was published on January 21, 2004. A Scoping Session was heard on March 17, 2004.
Historic Status:	The project site is vacant.
Service Delivery District:	IV-Fruitvale
City Council district:	6
For further information:	Contact case planner Heather Klein at 510 238-3659 or by e-mail at hklein@oaklandnet.com .

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide preliminary design review comments for the Siena Hill project. The 3.86 acre, vacant project site is located off of Keller Avenue, between Greenridge Drive and Rilea Way. The applicant proposes the construction of 32 attached single-family dwellings on 32 lots, 103 off-street parking spaces, and a gated private road. The project would also include the removal of a portion of the median strip on Keller in order to create a left turn lane onto proposed Siena Drive.

The buildings are designed in the Italian hillside architectural style. The buildings will step up the slope from Keller, which will reduce the mass and bulk of the buildings while keeping with the Italian "hill town" design of the project. Architectural features include clay tile roofs, tower elements, trellises, wrought-iron balconies and railings, and wood window trim.

The project also requires a Planned Unit Development (PUD), a Tentative Tract Map (TTM), and Minor Variances for the height and minimum separation of retaining walls and for maximum percentage of front yard paving.

Additional discussion of these issues is provided later in the ZONING COMPLIANCE and DESIGN ISSUES Sections. Design review is also required for the project.

Staff has determined that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be prepared for this project. A Notice of Preparation to prepare an EIR was published on January 21, 2004 and a Scoping Session was heard on March 17, 2004. Staff anticipates the draft EIR to be released in mid to late May.

Staff requests comments from the Design Review Committee and the public regarding the design of the proposed project that may provide direction to the applicant and staff as design work and environmental analysis proceeds toward full Planning Commission review.

PROJECT SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

The 3.86 acre project site is located on the east side of Keller Avenue, between Greenridge Drive and Rilea Way. The surrounding land uses include single and multi-family housing, churches, auto service facilities, and convenience stores. Located to the north is a mix of single and multi-family housing. Single-family homes are also located to the east, west, and south of the project site. The proposed development will be visible from the Interstate 580 freeway which is located further to the south.

The area is designated Detached Unit Residential, according to the General Plan (as described in more detail below), which anticipates a mainly residential area, as well as schools and small civic institutions where appropriate.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project would consist of 32 attached single-family homes on 32 parcels. The project would include the removal of a portion of the median strip on Keller Ave. in order to create a left turn lane. The homes would be accessed via a gated, private, one-way road, entering off of Keller Ave. and exiting onto Greenridge Drive. The development would also include 103 off-street parking spaces. Each unit would be provided 3 parking spaces, 1 space in the garage, 1 space in the driveway, and 1 space between a landscaped buffer and the driveway. Seven guest spaces are located throughout the development. In addition, 17 parking spaces would be available on Keller Avenue for guests and the general public. Parking on Keller Ave. would be accessed by 2 pedestrian stairways through the project.

Plans show 18 downslope homes and 14 upslope homes, with one home per lot. The homes will range in size from 1,800 to 1,960 S.F. on an average lot size of 5,300 S.F. The front setbacks range from 0-20'. Each home has one 0' setback along the side property line, while the other side setback ranges from 6-275'. The rear yards range from 15'-95'.

The buildings are designed in the Italian hillside architectural style. The building materials include stucco in warm terracotta colors with clay tile roofs. The building clusters are used as catalysts for variety in the facades. These facade treatments include tower elements, trellises, wrought-iron balconies and railings, and wood window trim. The buildings will step down the slope to Keller, which will reduce the mass and bulk of the buildings while keeping with the "Italian hill town" design of the project.

The project proposes extensive hardscape and softscape elements throughout the development. Hardscape elements include a monument sign, entry/exit gates, private stairs, decorative paving, and retaining walls. A 5' wide landscape buffer is proposed in front of a 5' tall keystone wall for the length of the project site along Keller Ave. In addition, 2 pedestrian stairways from Keller link to a walkway that runs behind each downhill home. Open Space is provided through front, side, and rear yards. The landscaping plans show native trees and shrubs, vines and groundcovers. Landscaping will minimize erosion, soften the buildings, and contribute to the visual aesthetic.

GENERAL PLAN ANALYSIS

The General Plan land use classification for the project site is Detached Unit Residential. This classification is "intended to create, maintain, and enhance residential areas characterized by detached, single unit structures. Although the project is proposing attached single family homes, each home is located on an individual lot with a 0' lot line to one side. By implementing a shared lot line, the project is able to cluster development and reduce grading impacts. The Land Use and Transportation element of the General Plan states in Policy N7.6 that development on subdivided parcels should be allowed where the site and building design minimize environmental impacts. The Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation element states in policy OS-1.3, that creative architecture and site planning which minimizes grading should be encouraged. The maximum allowable density for the Detached Unit Residential designation is 11 units per gross acre, which equates to 14.6 units per net acre. Accordingly, a maximum of 43 units would be permitted on the 3.86 acre project site. By clustering development, an integrated site plan with a reduced density of 32 units is achieved. In addition, the density is compatible to the surrounding multi-family homes.

ZONING COMPLIANCE

The project site is zoned R-50 Medium Density Residential, however due to residential density in the surrounding neighborhood and the environmental constraints, staff has applied a "best fit" zone of R-30 One Family Residential to the site. The R-30 regulations are more restrictive than R-50. The R-50 allows 1 unit per 1,500 S.F. for project sites over 10,000 S.F. while the R-30 allows 1 unit per lot with a minimum lot area of 5,000 S.F. The 32 unit project is 1 unit under the allowable zoning density for R-30.

The criteria for review and approval of this facility at this location, includes the following: The Planned Unit Development criteria in Section 17.140.080, the Design Review Criteria in Section 17.136.070, and the criteria for Variances in Section 17.148.050. All applicable criteria will be analyzed and appropriate findings will be made by staff, at the time the Planning Commission considers final action.

The following table depicts the project's comparison to the R-50 and the R-30 development standards.

Zoning Regulation Comparison Table

Criteria	R-50	R-30	Proposed	Comment
Yard – Front	15'	20'	0-20'	Requirement waived with a PUD.*
Yard – Side Lot Line	4'	5'	0'-275'	Requirement waived with a PUD.*
Yard – Rear	15'	20'	15'-95'	Requirement waived with a PUD.*
Height	30'	25' or 30' with a pitched roof	30	Meets both R-50 and R-30 requirements.
Open Space	200 S.F. / unit = 6,400 S.F.	N/A **	139,922 S.F. private open space***	Meets both R-50 and R-30 requirements.**
Parking	1 space / unit = 32 spaces	2 / spaces unit = 64 spaces	103 spaces	Meets both R-50 and R-30 requirements.
Density	Lots > 10,000 S.F.: 1 unit / 1,500 S.F.	1 single family dwelling per lot	1 single family dwelling per lot	Meets both R-50 and R-30 requirements.

Table Notes:

* Bonus: See Section 17.122.100g.

** Open Space for the R-30 is achieved through setback requirements. If open space is considered the front and the back yard than a lot in the R-30 with minimum dimensions would provide 1,800 S.F. of open space. For 32 lots the total would 57,600 S.F. of open space.

*** Every square foot of private open space is considered shall be considered equivalent to two square feet of group open space, Section 17.126.020.

DESIGN ISSUES

The project is a medium density development that is striving to create an integrated residential community on the edge of an existing residential neighborhood. The area contains a combination of single and multi-family residences and churches. Auto service facilities and convenience stores are also located in proximity to the project site. Staff believes that the overall site plan, height, massing, and architectural character are appropriate to the area.

Staff has identified a number of design issues and staff's approach to resolving these issues in the next section of this report. It is requested that the DRC comment on these issues as well as any other layout or design elements.

- *Variances.* As currently designed, the project would require Minor Variances related to maximum percentage of front yard paving and height and minimum separation of retaining walls. A Variance is requested for maximum front yard paving. Section 17.102.400(a) limits the amount of front yard paving to 50%. As shown, all 32 lots are not complying with this regulation due to the addition of off-street guest parking spaces. Staff believes that given the steepness of the slope and the need for off-street guest parking, that this variance can be supported. Staff has requested that all parking areas be designed with pervious materials to reduce water run-off and provide a different visual texture from the asphalt road. In addition,

the parking is not continuous, but broken up by landscaping at regular intervals. The applicant has also requested a Variance for the height and minimum separation of the retaining walls. Section 17.102.400 states that the maximum retaining wall height is 6' and that multiple retaining walls shall be separated by at least 4'. Many retaining walls throughout the project are 10' in height and there are a few instances where the walls are less than 4' apart. Staff believes that the retaining wall height and separation is necessary to stabilize the graded slope and therefore a variance can be supported. Additional design comments are provided in the *Retaining Wall* section below.

- *Number of Parcels.* The project is located on a steep hillside that was cut on a 2:1 horizontal to vertical ratio during the construction of Keller Ave. The construction of the project will include grading and the extensive use of retaining walls, especially at the projects' entrance and exit and behind the uphill units. It is staff's belief that a separate parcel should be created to maintain the large open space areas at the entrance and exit. In addition, the area behind the retaining walls on the upslope units should be included in this parcel and the upslope lot size reduced. As shown, homeowners cannot access this area due to the height of the retaining walls. Staff believes that this parcel should be maintained by the Homeowner's Association in addition to the private road, pedestrian walkway, and gates.
- *Bulk and Massing.* The bulk and massing of the units is an issue due to the steepness of the slope. The bulk and mass of the units are decreased by stepping the units down the slope however staff believes that the "stepping" of the building is too uniform and repetitive. Staff recommends that each story vary in height as the building steps down, each story decrease slightly in width, and that one unit be set back from the other unit. This will prevent a "wall-like" appearance from Keller Ave. In addition, the side elevations should have both projecting and receding elements, to cast shadow lines and further reduce the mass and bulk. Staff has also suggested various ways to further reduce the bulk and these are outlined in the *Materials and Colors* section below.
- *Slope Stability and Grading.* At the two community meetings, neighbors voiced concerns over the amount of grading and the effect on slope stability and drainage. A preliminary grading plan reviewed for the Initial Study determined that 12,750 cubic yards of soil would be moved on the site. Approximately half of the soil would be used as fill and 6,000-7,000 cubic yards of soil would be hauled off-site. These issues will be more thoroughly analyzed in the draft EIR.
- *Aesthetic appearance from Keller and I-580.* The aesthetic impacts will also be studied in the draft EIR.
- *Landscaping Plan.* A landscaping plan along Keller will be a critical component in order to soften and provide relief from the bulk and massing. Landscaping should also screen the retaining walls. A conceptual landscaping plan has been provided, but additional details are needed including are sizes and exact locations. Furthermore, native and water conserving plants should be used as to reduce the need for irrigation.

- *Architectural Design.* The Italian “hilltown theme” represents a clear difference regarding the architectural style of the surrounding single and multi-family homes that were constructed in a 1950-60’s modern box-like style. Because the project site is located on the edge of this development and because the existing homes are not really visible from Keller or I-580, staff believes that the style difference is not an issue.
- *Materials and colors* are crucial components to the authenticity of the Italian “hilltown” theme and high quality materials should be required. Staff believes that the exterior materials and colors as shown on the materials board and on the plans are appropriate for the development. As stated above, staff believes that additional details will further reduce the bulk and massing and these are listed below.
 - a. The building clusters should be used as catalysts for variety in the facades. Provide staff with 3 or 4 different building variations.
 - b. The windows should be wood or have a similar look. The windows should be deeply recessed and have projecting mullions.
 - c. The window and door sashes and trim should be dark colors that compliment the terracotta tones.
 - d. Recess the rear skirt walls to provide a shadow line that would serve to break up the massing.
- *Entrance, Exit, and Pedestrian Gates.* The City has an established policy that prohibits private gates across roadways.

Staff believes that the gate to the pedestrian stairway is appropriate to reveal the stairway location and to break up the retaining wall along Keller Ave. This gate will also provide security to the adjacent downhill units.

- *Retaining Walls.* As mentioned previously in this report, there is extensive use of retaining walls throughout the project site and the design of these walls will be important to consider as design development occurs. The applicant has stated that the retaining walls will be either shot-crete or keystone walls, however few details have been provided. More design work and specifications for the retaining walls must be completed prior to Planning Commission review, including the materials, color, and construction details. Staff believes that a stone veneer retaining wall would be a more appropriate to the architectural character of the development.

CONCLUSION

Staff recommends the Design Review Committee provide comments and direction on the design of the proposed project with emphasis discussed above, as well as any other issues the Committee may have.

Respectfully submitted:

Claudia Cappio
Development Director

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Planner II, Major Development Projects

Attachments:

A. Project Plans, Sections, and Elevations