

Discussion:

Commissioner Gower stated the intensity of development and the way it is laid out on the site is more appropriate than with the previous project to the south. This mitigates some of the compatibility issues they had on the property to the south.

Commissioner Johnson responded to concerns expressed during public comment. Regarding the potential for crime in the area, usually that decreases when vacant lots are developed. Regarding open space, this site has always been intended to be developed and there is open space and a park nearby.

Commissioner Villanueva agreed this is a good site for this type of development. The neighboring commercial stores and connectivity for other forms of transportation can assist in alleviating traffic issues.

Mike Mischel, Engineering Manager, responded to concerns regarding traffic analysis of the intersection. This project, along with the project to the south, do not rise to the level of requiring a full comprehensive traffic study of the area.

It was moved by Alex Velto, seconded by Harris Armstrong, to approve, with the additional signage condition. Motion Pass.

RESULT: **Approved [7 TO 0]**
MOVER: Alex Velto, Chair
SECONDER: Harris Armstrong, Commissioner
AYES: Velto, Johnson, Drakulich, Gower, Munoz, Villanueva, Armstrong
NAYS:

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ABSENT:

4.6 **Staff Report (For Possible Action): Case No. LDC23-00018 (Aspire at North Hills) -**

A request has been made for a conditional use permit to allow a 192 unit multi-family development. The ±8.64 acre subject site consists of four parcels with ±308.63 feet of frontage on North Hills Boulevard and ±179 feet of frontage on East Golden Valley Road. The subject site is located within the General Commercial (GC) zoning district and has a Master Plan land use designation of Suburban Mixed-Use (SMU). **[Ward 4]**

Derek Wilson, Rubicon Design Group, gave an overview of the project.

Leah Brock, Assistant Planner, presented staff analysis and recommended approval.

Disclosures: received and read emails, visited the site, spoke with applicant's representative, familiar with the site

Public Comment:

Danny Cleous Robin Lovelace
 Kelly Orr Selena Munoz
 Richard Pruett Hailey Troyan
 Sharon Burke Natalie Larson

Voicemails received from 11/17/22:

Questions:

Mike Mischel, Engineering Manager, answered questions from Commissioner Munoz regarding traffic. He stated he does not know when 395 is planned to be widened. There was a traffic study done for North Hills Blvd. with this project.

There was an apartment complex project proposed down the street six months ago that also did a traffic study on North Hills Blvd. He confirmed for Commissioner Munoz that it is his recollection that the project proposed down

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the road was denied due to traffic.

Commissioner Villanueva referenced public comment regarding flooding and asked if drainage is an issue on the site.

Mr. Wilson stated that is not something he has heard. The way to fix that is to build something there. He believes drainage and detention basins do work. He confirmed there is a detention basin planned for this site.

Mr. Wilson explained for Commissioner Armstrong the density differences between Spanish Springs and Golden Valley areas. Spanish Springs is a large housing area to the north that all funnels into one spot where everyone does their commercial shopping. The North Valleys is more spread out. When a retailer looks at a site they evaluate the population in the area around that site and in Golden Valley you don't have the same kind of density you have in Spanish Springs.

Mr. Wilson elaborated further on the stormwater issue for Commissioner Gower. He explained the destination of flows for the site and the function of the proposed detention basin.

Ms. Brock explained for Commissioner Gower the process of evaluating project requests. When it comes to traffic issues, staff relies on the engineering team to provide comments and coordinate with Public Works.

Jason Garcia-LoBue, Planning Manager, further explained that staff uses the master plan as our guiding policy document. We also rely on input from other agencies and for this item we did get input from the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) and the school district that is included with the staff report. Conditions of approval are included to address concerns that may be raised. Public Works and Utilities Services are keeping tabs on capacity issues.

Ms. Brock responded to an earlier question regarding widening of 395. According to the Regional Transportation Plan, it is scheduled to be done in the 2026 to 2030 timeframe.

Ms. Brock confirmed for Commissioner Gower that based on information provided by the partner agencies staff was able to make all the findings and recommends approval.

Craig Rowe, Tanamera Construction, responded to Commissioner Villanueva stating the project would be ready in about two years for people to move in.

Mr. Wilson confirmed for Commissioner Villanueva that the school district's

concerns were addressed and they will keep the existing walking connection at the back of the school.

Loren Chilson, Headway Transportation, responded to Chair Velto and discussed how the Reno Regional Transportation Plan and funding work.

Discussion:

Commissioner Munoz stated his frustration with projects in the North Valleys comes with silence from the North Valleys. He thanked the people from Ward 4 for showing up tonight. We keep hearing that we need to build more houses before we get retail or commercial. When projects like this come in on commercial property, they soak up another property we can no longer use for the things that we need up there. Staff works extremely hard and takes great care in putting together the staff reports but the bigger picture is not being seen here. We keep hearing they are going to fix the roads. We do not need this project in order to get the roads fixed. I am torn because I like this project, but in five years. We are not ready for it now.

Chair Velto stated Commissioner Munoz is a great advocate for the community he lives in any time we have these projects in the North Valleys. He agrees there should be more commercial in the North Valleys and that the roads need to improve. This project in particular is designed in a way that its location mitigates traffic. The effect of commercial development there would be worse and more burdensome on the roads. There is a lot of area nearby that is zoned commercial and it is not being built on. If commercial were cost effective at this point, we would see commercial projects. This is an infill project, potentially walkable, near a school and conforms with the Master Plan.

Vice Chair Drakulich stated this location is a better place for residential. There are areas closer to the freeway that would be better for commercial development. We are not seeing proposals for commercial development there and there are existing commercial developments that have available vacant spaces.

Commissioner Johnson stated there was an extreme disconnect between the applicant and staff presentations and public comment. Public comment spoke more about the broader picture. We have questioned for a long time what the last project will be that is going to be too much and the answer is never “this one”. We keep approving things because the mitigations are coming. The fundamentals of this project match our desired approach to infill but there is and has been that bigger picture issue. We are balancing a project that on its merits makes sense but on its location and timing could be problematic.

Commissioner Munoz stated I asked to be on the Planning Commission when a spot was vacant. I was asked to talk to a group of developers to interview me basically to see if I was okay for the job. To see if my views lined up with theirs. I knew what needed to be done for me to get here to protect my community. This last November the community spoke up and said enough is enough and elected someone that would try and do what is right for the community. We have had 1,700 people sign a petition saying we do not want this up here. It does not work for us right now. Nobody in North Valleys wants this up here. I am torn because I like the project. It is a good fit. I don't like losing commercial to residential.

This would be a good project five years down the road when our roadways are fixed and our freeway is widened.

Commissioner Villanueva stated she is also torn on this project. It is a great project but the schools are beyond capacity and the infrastructure really isn't there but we don't have the authority to tell the developer what to build there and they have property rights.

Discussion on the motion:

Commissioner Gower stated we are at a crossroads again in the North Valleys with individual projects. It is not fair to penalize this property owner with a proposal that complies with all of the elements of code. If the city or the community came forward with data and specific evidence relative to an individual project that says this project tips the scale and we cannot move forward with any future development, then that's it and future projects are on notice that the North Valleys can handle no more. The city responded to me and my question saying that based on the expert opinions of the other agencies, based on the model that Mr. Chilson outlined on how the community deals with funding infrastructure using development, that is what we have to live with and operate in. Until that changes and there is specific information that says this project doesn't meet those findings, then time and time again we will be in this position of having to answer these types of questions and make these tough decisions. I don't have compelling information counter to what staff presented to be able to say that this is the project that we draw the line in the sand with.

Vice Chair Drakulich read the appeal process into the record.

It was moved by Alex Velto, seconded by J.D. Drakulich, to approve. Motion Pass.

RESULT: **Approved [5 TO 2]**
MOVER: Alex Velto, Chair
SECONDER: J.D. Drakulich, Vice Chair
AYES: Velto, Drakulich, Gower, Villanueva, Armstrong

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NAYS: Mark Johnson, Arthur Munoz
BSENT: