

## Planning Commission Staff Report

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March 23, 2016

Item 6. b.

- SUBJECT:** P15-0551
- APPLICANT/  
PROPERTY OWNER:** Todd Deutscher, Catalyst Development Partners
- PURPOSE:** Work Session to review and receive comments on a Preliminary Review application to relocate the existing single-family residence from 536 St. John Street to 4372 Pleasanton Avenue and construct 12 townhomes at 536 and 550 St. John Street and the adjacent vacant parcel.
- LOCATIONS:** 536 and 550 St. John Street and adjacent vacant parcel  
4372 Pleasanton Avenue
- GENERAL PLAN:** 536/550 St John Street: High Density Residential  
4372 Pleasanton Avenue: Medium Density Residential
- ZONING:** 536/550 St. John Street: RM-1,500 (Multi-Family Residential), Core Area Overlay District  
4372 Pleasanton Avenue: R-1-6,500 (One-Family Residential), Core Area Overlay District
- SPECIFIC PLAN:** 536/550 St. John Street: Downtown Specific Plan – High Density Residential  
4372 Pleasanton Avenue: Downtown Specific Plan – Medium Density Residential
- EXHIBITS:**
- A. [Planning Commission Work Session Topics](#)
  - B. [536 St. John Street Site Plan, Street Scene, and Floor Plans dated "Received January 29, 2016"](#)
  - C. [4372 Pleasanton Avenue Site Survey, Site Plan, and Historic Survey dated "Received January 29, 2016"](#)
  - D. [Preliminary Review Comment Letter and Site Plans](#)
  - E. [Location and Notification Map](#)
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### BACKGROUND

On August 25, 2015, the applicant submitted a Preliminary Review application on a proposal to retain the existing historic dwelling and construct 13, three-story townhomes at 536 and

550 St. John Street and the vacant parcel to the east of 536 St. John Street (for ease of reference, these three parcels are referred to as 536 St. John Street, or “project site,” in this report). This initial submittal included relocating the existing dwelling unit from the center of the project site to the northeast corner and reorienting it 90 degrees such that the front no longer faced St. John Street, and constructing 13, three-story townhomes in a motor court type of development (see the site plan in Exhibit D). After reviewing the application, staff provided the applicant with a letter discussing concerns related to the layout of the units, orientation of the relocated home, aesthetics, architectural styling and the need for the design of the units to be consistent with the Downtown Specific Plan policies and Downtown Design Guidelines (staff notes that elevation drawings were not provided), lack of private/group open space, and lack of guest parking. Specifically, the initial preliminary layout was not pedestrian-oriented, did not reflect historic patterns of development typically found in the downtown area, and the proposal diminished the street presence of the historic home by changing its orientation from front (street)-facing to side-facing. Additionally, staff encouraged the applicant to utilize a simple Queen Anne Victorian style design for the new units (in order to be compatible with the existing home should it be retained on-site). Please see staff’s preliminary comment letter and project site plans in Exhibit D for additional information.

Over the next several months, staff and the applicant discussed alternative design concepts for the subject site that addressed staff’s concerns. This included reducing the number of units and relocating the existing dwelling unit to another downtown property. On January 29, 2016, the applicant resubmitted preliminary drawings to relocate the existing single-family residence from 536 St. John Street to 4372 Pleasanton Avenue and construct 12 townhomes at 536 John Street. Key changes from the previous submittal included: (1) relocating the existing home; (2) reducing the number of units from 14 to 12 units; (3) creating a street presence by orienting the street-adjacent units towards St. John Street; and (4) redesigning the project to be consistent with the height and scale of the surrounding area by designing the units as two-stories.

As proposed, the project site would need to be rezoned and a Planned Unit Development (PUD) development plan would be required to allow flexibility to the development standards. Staff notes that the Pleasanton Avenue site would not require rezoning.

## **PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION**

Prior to formally submitting a development plan package to the City, the proposed project concept is being presented to the Planning Commission as a work session for the Commission’s review and direction. No action on the project will be made at the work session.

## **SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTIONS**

### 536 St. John Street

The subject site, comprised of three parcels, is located on the south side of St. John Street, is approximately 0.73-acres in area and generally square in shape and relatively flat. There is perimeter fencing along the east, south, and west property lines and mature landscaping and trees immediately adjacent to the existing, approximately 910-square-foot single-story dwelling unit, constructed in 1900, and detached garage. The home was included in the City’s Historic Resource Survey and was found to be a historic resource. There are mature trees that border





**Image 2: Street View (536 St. John Street Site)**



4372 Pleasanton Avenue

The 4372 Pleasanton Ave. site is an irregularly shaped, relatively flat, corner lot totaling approximately 20,000-square-feet in area. The property is bounded by St. Mary Street to the north, the Union Pacific Railroad tracks to the east, Division Street to the south, and Pleasanton Avenue to the west. There is an approximately 576 square-foot single-family dwelling unit, constructed between 1907 and 1929, oriented west towards Pleasanton Avenue, an accessory structure on the east side of the property, and pool located on the northern side of the property. The home was included in the City's Historic Resource Survey and was determined not to be a historic resource. There is perimeter fencing along all nine property lines and mature landscaping and trees surrounding the pool at the northern end of the site. There are three additional mature trees scattered throughout the property and shrubs located in front of the single-family home on Pleasanton Avenue.

The surrounding properties contain single-family homes. Due to the unique shape of the site, the property shares two of its nine property lines with a single-family dwelling site to the immediate east and west of the site. The property also shares its eastern property line with the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. Images 3 and 4 show an aerial and street-scene view of the subject site and existing building.







and landscaping) in order to accommodate the new townhomes. The site would be developed with six, 1,790-square-foot, two-story townhomes with two-car garages at the front of the site, facing St. John Street, and six 2,152-square-foot, two-story townhomes with two-car garages at the southern end of the property. Access to the site would be from a decorative concrete paver drive aisle on the east side of the property that also provides access to the individual garages in each townhome. A pedestrian pathway would also extend from St. John Street (between Lots 3 and 4) to the drive aisle. Each unit would have three bedrooms and private open space. Please refer to sheets A-2 and A-3 of Exhibit B for floor plans. No guest parking would be provided, but street parking is available on St. John Street. Please refer to Exhibit B and Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Site Plan (536 St. John Street)**



A streetscape view of the project frontage on St. John Street is included in Exhibit B and Figure 2. The units facing St. John Street are designed to include some architectural features found in other existing buildings along St. John Street and downtown. Most noticeably, architectural elements prominent in the Craftsman architectural styling are proposed (e.g., inviting front porches, prominent porch supports, knee braces, and gable roof). The roof designs include both side and front gable roofs, which creates more variety in the design and breaks up the massing. The buildings would feature stucco first floor walls with stone veneer, board-and-batten wood siding, horizontal and shingle siding on the second floor, and composition roofing. The proposed colors and materials of the buildings are natural colors and would complement that of the existing residences in the neighborhood. The rear units would have the same architectural styling with the exception that the porches would be smaller in size and the garages would be on the front elevation.

**Figure 2: St. John Street Streetscape View**

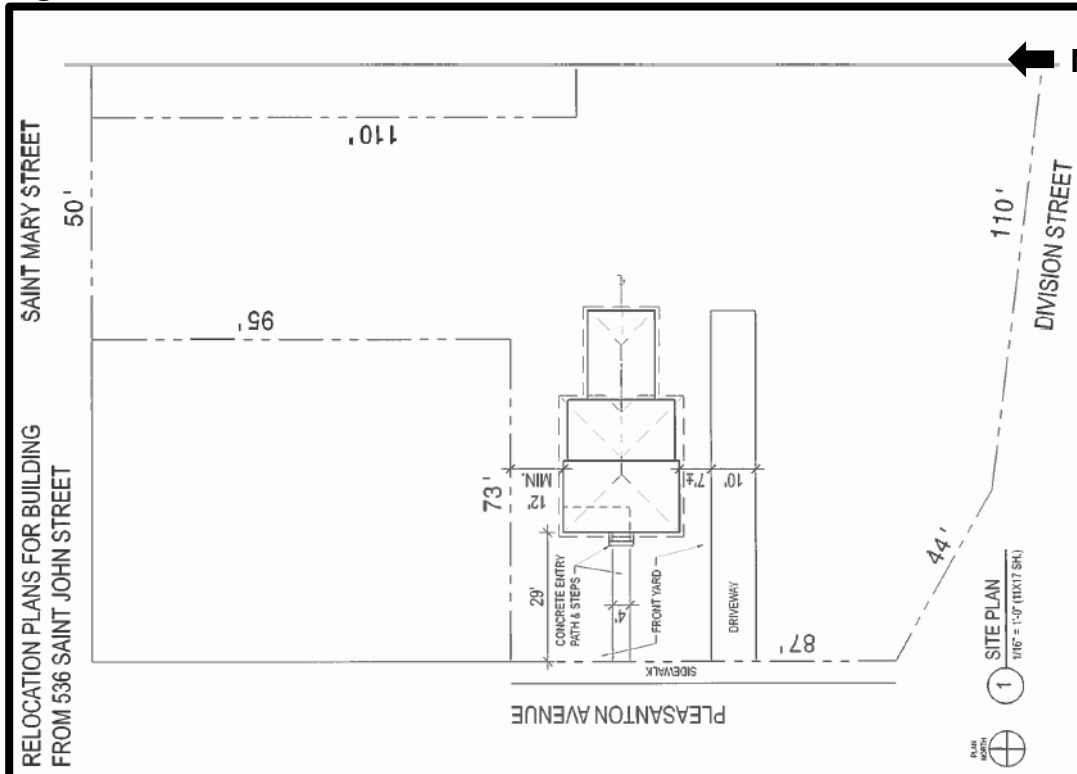


4372 Pleasanton Avenue

The applicant is proposing to demolish the approximately 576-square-foot single-story home in order to relocate the existing home from 536 St. John to 4372 Pleasanton Avenue. A historic evaluation for relocating the 536 St. John Street home to 4372 Pleasanton Avenue was prepared (Exhibit C) and is discussed further in the *Historic Resources* section of this report.

The relocated home would be oriented such that the front of the home would face Pleasanton Avenue. Additional improvements shown on the preliminary site plan, found on page 2 of Exhibit C, include a new concrete entry path and steps leading to the front of the home and a 10-foot wide drive on the southern side of the house. No other improvements to the site and/or the home are proposed at this time. Please refer to Exhibit C and Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Site Plan**



## CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE WORK SESSION

Staff is presenting the Commission with conceptual plans for the two sites (Exhibit B and Exhibit C) for consideration and comments. This work session will allow the Planning Commission the opportunity to provide direction to the applicant and staff regarding any issues it wishes to be addressed prior to a formal application submittal. The areas noted below are where staff would find the Commission's input most helpful.

### Historic Resources

The City-initiated historic resource evaluation for the existing home at 4372 Pleasanton Avenue stated that the existing home did not embody the distinctive characteristics of a type or period of construction and the property was not significantly associated with any historic events or persons in the history of Pleasanton. Therefore, the report concluded that the existing home was not a historic resource. The Downtown Specific Plan's Historic Resources Policy No. 2 prohibits the demolition of any residential building in a residential zoning district found to be a historic resource unless the building is determined to be unsafe or dangerous, and if no other reasonable means of rehabilitation or relocation can be achieved. The City did not determine the house to be a historic resource and, therefore, the structure could be demolished.

The following Downtown Specific Plan Historic Resources Policies discuss the relocation of historic homes:

- Policy No. 4 - Permit historic homes to be relocated within Downtown where: (1) the new neighborhood contains older homes; (2) the replacement home is consistent with the design quality of the relocated home; and (3) the replacement home is compatible with the neighborhood's architectural styles and scale.
- Policy No. 9 – Future residential development (i.e., when additional dwelling units are being proposed on a property that has existing homes) should generally provide for the preservation and rehabilitation of existing on-site street frontage homes built before 1942 or which otherwise substantially contribute to the “small town” character of the neighborhood in terms of architecture and scale. Exceptions may be permitted to: (1) relocate such homes to other appropriate Downtown locations for permanent preservation and rehabilitation; or (2) demolish and replace such homes which are specifically found by the City to lack historic and/or architectural significance.

The Preservation & Relocation section of the Downtown Design Guidelines, page 10, addresses relocation of historic buildings within Downtown. Specifically, relocation of an existing building of heritage value within Downtown should meet the following criteria:

- The relocated building is compatible with the new area in terms of scale and architectural style; and
- Moving the original building does not jeopardize its historic status.

The applicant prepared a report indicating whether and how the existing residence at 536 St. John Street could be relocated to a different site while still preserving the building's historic



architectural integrity. The historic evaluation stated that relocation of the home at 536 St. John Street to the Pleasanton Avenue site would be appropriate as the residential unit would be relocated to a nearby residential site within the Downtown that contains older homes around it and the relocated building would be highly compatible with the scale and architecture at its new location.

Other options for the two sites could include: (1) integrating the existing St. John Street home into the new development by keeping the St. John Street home at the existing site (536 St. John Street) and moving it to the northwest or northeast corner of the site, maintaining its street-facing orientation, and adding the new townhomes around it; or (2) relocating the St. John Street home south of the existing Pleasanton Avenue home and retaining, refurbishing, and converting the existing Pleasanton Avenue home to a second dwelling unit. The second option could be challenging, as the existing structure appears to be in disrepair, but would have the benefit of retaining an older (albeit non-historic) building while increasing the City's stock of second units.

### **Discussion Point**

A. *Does the Planning Commission support demolishing the existing home at 4372 Pleasanton Avenue and relocating the historic home at 536 St. John Street to the Pleasanton Avenue site?*

### **General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan Consistency and Land Uses**

#### *536 St. John Street*

The General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan designate 536 St. John Street as High Density Residential – allowing for residential development of greater than 8 units per gross acre. The General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan have language that encourages and/or allows a variety of housing types (i.e., detached and attached single-family homes, duplexes, townhouses, condominiums, and apartments) under the high density designation provided that all requirements of the Zoning Ordinance are met. If the house is relocated to 4372 Pleasanton Avenue, there would be 12 dwelling units on the 0.73-acre subject site, which results in a density of 16.4 dwelling units per acre, consistent with the High Density Residential land use designation of the site in the General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan.

#### *4372 Pleasanton Avenue*

The General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan designates the subject property as Medium Density Residential – between 2 to 8 dwelling units per gross acre. The existing home on the subject site would be demolished and replaced with the existing single-family home that would be relocated from 536 St. John Street. Therefore, the density of this site would not change. One single-family home on the 20,000-square-foot site would result in a density of 2.2 dwelling units per acre, consistent with the Medium Density Residential land use designation of the General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan.

### **Discussion Point**

*B. Is the proposed density for the St. John Street site acceptable?*

#### **Zoning and Site Development Standards**

##### *536 St. John Street*

The property is zoned RM-1,500 (Multi-Family Residential) District and located in the Core Area Overlay District. The project would include 12 for sale dwelling units. Therefore, the project does not qualify for the modified development standards for multi-family housing projects in the Core Area Overlay District, which only apply to projects with 10 or fewer rental units.

Chapter 18.36.030(C) of the Pleasanton Municipal Code (PMC) allows multi-family dwellings in the RM-1,500 District to be a combination of attached, detached, and duplex units. As stated in Table 18.84.010 of the PMC, the RM-1,500 District requires at least 1,500 square feet of site area per dwelling unit and a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 50 percent. The setback requirements for the RM-1,500 District require a minimum 20-foot front yard setback, 8-foot setback on one side yard and an aggregate of 20 feet between the two side yards, and a 30-foot rear yard setback. The maximum height allowed is 40 feet, measured from finished grade to the mid-point of the roof, and 300 square feet of group usable open space per dwelling unit is required.

As proposed and shown in Table 1, compared to existing development standards, the project exceeds the allowable FAR, does not meet the minimum setback requirements, does not meet the minimum lot area (10,500 square feet), depth (100 feet), and width (80 feet), and is not providing group open space. Elevation drawings were not provided. Therefore, staff cannot determine if the project will meet the sloping plane and height requirements. However, it is unlikely that a two-story townhome would exceed 40 feet in height.

**Table 1: City Zoning Requirements vs. Proposed Project at 536 St. John St.**

<b>Site Development Standard</b>	<b>City Requirements</b>	<b>Proposed Project</b>
<i>Site Area per Dwelling Unit</i>	21 units max. (1,500 sq. ft. min. site area/du)	12 units 2,650 sq. ft. site area/du
<i>Floor Area Ratio</i>	50% max.	unknown
<i>Building Height</i>	40 feet max.	unknown
<i>Setbacks</i>		
*Front (north)	20 ft. min.	Plan 1: 10 ft. 3 in. (bldg. wall to property line)
Side (east)	8 ft. min	Plan 1: 31ft Plan 2: 10 ft.
Side (west)	20 ft. min. (aggregate b/w the two side yards)	Plan 1: 39 ft. aggregate Plan 2: 18 ft. aggregate
*Rear (south)	30 ft. min.	Plan 2: 20-24 ft.; 10-14 ft with optional room (bldg. wall to property line)
<i>Open Space</i>		
Group	300 sq. ft. min. per dwelling unit	None
Private	Not required	50 sq. ft. or 150 sq. ft./du

\*Note: Taken from the closest Plan (i.e., Plan 1 or Plan 2)

As proposed, the project would need to be rezoned to Planned Unit Development (PUD) to allow flexibility in development standards.

**4372 Pleasanton Avenue**

The property is zoned R-1-6,500 (One-Family Residential) District. As proposed, and shown in Table 2, the relocated residence at 4372 Pleasanton Avenue would be below the maximum allowed FAR and would meet the minimum setback requirements. Elevation drawings were not provided. Therefore, staff cannot determine exactly how tall the existing single-family home is, but it would not exceed 40 feet in height once relocated.



**Table 2: City Zoning Requirements vs. Proposed Project at 4372 Pleasanton Ave.**

<b>Site Development Standard</b>	<b>City Requirements</b>	<b>Proposed Project</b>
<i>Lot Size</i>	6,500 sq. ft.	No change - 20,000 sq. ft.
<i>Floor Area Ratio</i>	40% max.	4.91%
<i>Building Height</i>	30 feet max.	Unknown (but is less than 40 ft.)
<i>Setbacks</i>		
Front (west)	23 ft. min.	29 ft.
Side (north)	5 ft. min	12 ft.
Street Side (south)	10 ft. min. (12 ft. min. aggregate b/w the two side yards)	80 ft. (92 ft.)
Rear (east)	20 ft. min.	50 ft.

**Discussion Points**

*C. Does the Planning Commission support PUD zoning for the 536 St. John Street site and the conceptual site plans for the two sites?*

**Parking Standards**

*536 St. John Street*

Similar to single-family homes, separately owned townhomes are required to have two parking spaces per unit, with at least one of the spaces covered in a garage or carport. The applicant is providing two covered spaces per unit via two-car garages in each unit and no on-site guest parking is proposed. Since these units are townhouses and not apartments, the PMC does not require on-site guest parking; however, the City normally requires some guest parking for townhouse or single-family home projects when there isn't on-street parking within a project. Staff notes that on small development sites in Downtown, guest parking can be difficult to accommodate while also providing two parking spaces per unit and meeting objectives regarding building height and urban design. However, other recent Downtown projects have successfully incorporated guest parking (including the recently approved 273 Spring Street project).

*4372 Pleasanton Avenue*

Detached, single-family homes, such as the home that will be relocated, are required to have two parking spaces (at least one covered). Parking for the relocated home was not addressed on the site plan in Exhibit C, but staff would work with the applicant to meet current requirements.

## **Discussion Points**

*D. Is the proposed parking for the 536 St. John Street site acceptable?*

### **Architecture and Design**

The townhouse units facing St. John Street are designed to include architectural features found in other existing buildings along St. John Street and downtown. The architecture has Craftsman elements, roof designs that include both side and front gable roofs, which creates more variety in the design and breaks up the massing, and features stucco first floor walls with stone veneer, board-and-batten wood siding, horizontal and shingle siding on the second floor, and composition roofing. With the exception of Lot 7, the garages would not be visible from St. John Street, and would promote the pedestrian character of Downtown. The proposed colors and materials of the buildings are natural colors and would complement that of the existing residences in the neighborhood.

There are no proposed changes to the relocated home at 4372 Pleasanton Avenue.

### **Discussion Point**

*E. Is the architecture of the townhomes acceptable?*

### **Additional Discussion Point**

*F. What other information would assist the Planning Commission in its decision on the proposal (e.g., color and material board, photo simulations, photo illustrations)?*

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Notices for this work session were sent to surrounding property owners and tenants within a 1,000-foot radius of the site. Staff has provided the location and noticing maps as Exhibit E for reference. At the time this report was published, staff had not received any public comments about the project.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

Since the Planning Commission will take no formal action on the project at the work session, no environmental document accompanies this work session report.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the Planning Commission review the proposal, hear all public testimony, and provide comments to staff and the applicant.

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### **Reviewed/Approved By:**

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