



Planning Commission Work Session Staff Report

January 10, 2007
Item 6.b

- SUBJECT:** PREV-621, Live-Work Dwelling Units
- APPLICANTS/
PROPERTY OWNERS:** Colleen and Adam Schwartz
- PURPOSE:** Work Session to review and receive comments on an application for preliminary review to construct an approximately 9,200 square foot three-story building with six live-work dwelling units.
- GENERAL PLAN:** Retail/Highway/Service Commercial Business and Professional Offices
- SPECIFIC PLAN:** Downtown Specific Plan
- ZONING:** C-C (Central Commercial), Core Area Overlay, and Downtown Revitalization Districts
- LOCATION:** 273 Spring Street
- ATTACHMENTS:**
1. Location Maps
 2. Exhibit A: Preliminary Site Plan, Elevations, Written Narrative, and Tree Report Dated "Received September 28, 2006"
 3. Exhibit B: Table 1 Comparing Live-Work Regulations in Other Cities
 4. Exhibit C: Photographs of the Property
 5. Exhibit D: Copy of the Applicable Sections of the Downtown Design Guidelines

BACKGROUND

The applicants submitted a preliminary proposal to construct six live-work units at 273 Spring Street. While the proposal is for live-work units, the applicants are flexible and willing to propose a mix of live-work units and non live-work units, and are willing to propose condominiums above ground floor retail. Before preparing formal plans, the applicants would like to receive the Planning Commission's and the public's initial comments about the proposal. The site is visible from Main Street and is proposed to be three-stories.

Live-Work

Live-work units emerged in the 1970s as manufacturers moved out of large industrial buildings and warehouses in downtown areas and artists began to occupy and use these spaces. By the late 1980s, a number of cities, including New York, Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco, began to legalize the live-work concept by adapting building and zoning regulations to accommodate them. This era of loft and warehouse conversions coincided with significant private investment in adaptive reuse of the structures for all manner of uses. Soon the artists were joined with small businesses, restaurants, personal and professional service businesses, coffee shops, galleries, and other sole-proprietors who wanted to live near where they worked.¹ Due to the success of these projects, developers are now proposing new buildings with live-work units in commercial and industrial areas.

This is the first live-work proposal in Pleasanton. Live-work generally means a built space used or designed to be used as both a workplace and as a residence. As such, at least one person who works in the space must actually live there. Typically employees and customers can come to the site. Some cities limit the uses allowed in the work space to art-making and gallery uses; however, more commonly, cities allow the uses of the underlying commercial zoning district, with the exception of hazardous uses, auto repair, and similar uses which are typically inappropriate in a residential area. For the Commission's information, staff has attached a table comparing live-work regulations in other cities (see Exhibit B). Pleasanton does not have specific live-work regulations.

Staff supports the concept of live-work in the Downtown for several reasons, including:

- The residents will shop, eat, and walk in Downtown, thus enhancing Downtown's economic vitality and cultural vibrancy
- The units are affordable by design, since they are typically small and eliminate the need for a resident to lease a separate work or living space
- Some or all of the residents are likely to be artists, and having persons regularly engaged in the arts residing in Downtown will enhance Downtown's cultural life
- Automobile impacts, such as traffic congestion, resource consumption (oil and gas), and air pollution impacts are reduced, since at least one resident in the dwelling will not be driving to work

Downtown Specific Plan and Design Guidelines

The proposed project is located in the Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) area and the Downtown Design Guidelines apply to this project. For the Commission's information, sections from the Downtown Design Guidelines are attached (see Exhibit D).

Subject Property

The property is approximately 14,700 square feet in size and is located on the north side of Spring Street. The lot is long and relatively narrow (approximately 200' long and 70-80' wide). The grade on the lot is approximately five feet higher than the grade on Main Street. There is an approximately 840 square foot one-story pilates studio at the rear of the lot, which is currently under construction. Most of the site is paved; however, there are 18 existing trees on the property, including trees of the following species: Coast Redwood, Tree of Heaven, Mexican Fan Palm, Canary Island Date Palm, California Black Walnut, and Black Locust. Eight of the trees are heritage trees (see tree report in Exhibit A).

The lot is an infill lot. A mix of residential and commercial properties are near the property. To the northeast, a one-story home is being remodeled. To the west are existing two-story commercial buildings on Main Street. To the north are residential dwellings. To the south, across Spring Street, is a loading area for Main Street properties and a mix of residential and commercial buildings.

Development surrounding the property is shown in the aerial photograph below.



Previous Proposal

In 2000, a previous property owner, Richard Seilheimer, submitted a preliminary proposal to merge 273 Spring Street with the adjacent lot to the west at 261 Spring Street, and build a two-story retail office building. Staff provided the applicants with design comments; however, a formal application was never submitted. As stated above, 261 Spring Street is currently being remodeled.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the work session is to provide the Planning Commission and the public with an opportunity to comment on the preliminary project. The preliminary proposal is for a three-story development with six ground floor commercial “work” spaces each connected to an upper story dwelling unit. Each of the six dwelling units would be connected to the ground floor “work” space via an internal staircase. As proposed, each dwelling unit would have approximately 2-3 bedrooms and 2-3 bathrooms and an attached garage. Eleven uncovered parking spaces would also be provided on site. As proposed, the units would range in size from 1,415 square feet (990 square feet residential and 425 square feet commercial) to 1,770 square feet (1,230 square feet residential and 540 square feet commercial). The rear building would be approximately 34 feet in height and the proposed building fronting Spring Street would be between approximately 32 and 40 feet in height, as measured from grade to peak. The two proposed buildings would be 9,200 square feet in size total. As proposed, the project would be built in two phases, four units in the first phase, and two units (the two by Spring Street) in the second phase.

DISCUSSION

The applicants request feedback on their initial proposal. To aid the Commission, staff has listed a series of questions it may wish to discuss. Also below are staff’s initial comments about the questions.

Discussion Questions

1. Should the building be located on the east or west side of the lot?
2. Should the building be two or three stories?
3. Is the proposed height of 34’, for the rear building, and 32’-40’, for the building fronting Spring Street, okay?
4. Is the proposed building too big for the lot?
5. Should a particular architectural theme be used?
6. If some or all of the units are live-work units, is it okay to require fewer parking spaces?
7. Should the ground floor “work” uses be restricted to art studio and similar uses or should offices, retail, restaurants, and other types of uses allowed in the Downtown be permitted?

8. Any other feedback?

Staff Comments

1. Question: Should the building be located on the east or west side of the lot?

Staff Comment

The building is currently proposed on the east side. A one-story structure is under construction on the lot immediately to the east at 261 Spring Street. This neighbor has expressed an initial concern to the applicants about the height/mass and location of the proposed building.

2. Question: Should the building be two or three stories?

Staff Comment

The Rose Hotel on Main Street is three stories.

Page 26 of the Downtown Specific Plan States the Following:

In order to preserve the historic character of the Downtown, new or remodeled buildings within the Downtown Commercial area should be limited to two-stories, except three-story buildings may be allowed on a case-by-case basis, subject to the following criteria:

- A. The building must be pedestrian in scale, as determined through the design review process, and shall include design features such as first-story storefront windows, recessed entries, building details, and awnings.
- B. The building must be designed to minimize its three-story appearance through the use of techniques such as dormer windows, stepping back upper floors, and using design features between building levels to assist in maintaining an overall horizontal design character to the building.
- C. The building must conform with the Municipal Code height limits.

3. Question: Is the proposed height of 34', for the rear building, and 32'-40' for the building fronting Spring Street, okay?

Staff Comment

Per the Pleasanton Municipal Code, 40' is the maximum building height allowed on this lot. The table below lists the heights of some of the taller Downtown buildings.

<u>Address</u>	<u>Height</u>
349 Main Street (Tully's, Cold Stone, Fontina)	33 ft. at parapet 44 ft. at tower top
750 Main Street (Oasis)	28.5 ft. at ridge 43 ft. at tower top
807 Main Street (Rose Hotel)	37.5 ft. at top of mansard roof 45.5 ft. at top of gable elements 47.5 ft. at tower top
855 Main Street (Pleasanton Hotel)	41.5 ft. at ridge 43 ft. at tower top
480 St. John/777 Peters (Chamber of Commerce)	34 ft. at ridge

4. Question: Is the proposed building too big for the lot?

Staff Comment

As proposed, the floor area ratio on the lot would be about 60% (10,040 square feet, minus 1,200 square feet of garage, divided by the lot size of 14,700 square feet). The maximum floor area ratio allowed on the lot is 300%. While the floor area is substantially lower than the maximum allowed, the proposal may not adhere to the parking requirements, as mentioned in number 6 below.

5. Question: Should a particular architectural theme be used?

Staff Comment

Since the building is close to Main Street, staff believes that any of the styles allowed in the Downtown Design Guidelines would be acceptable if well executed. Three design styles are proposed on the current building, mission, modern live-work style, and suburban apartment. Staff would prefer if the applicants chose one style and executed it well. Since the building is in Downtown, staff believes that the design of the entire building should be special, and that four-sided architecture should be used. In staff's opinion, the middle and rear portions of the proposed building do not embody the unique design character of Downtown and are similar in appearance to many recently constructed apartment complexes in a suburban areas. Staff believes the brick wall is too severe and that a storefront window(s) should be added on this wall. Staff likewise believes that the ground floor commercial spaces facing the parking lot and Spring Street should have storefront windows, recessed doorways, and storefront doors, as stated in the Downtown Design Guidelines. The applicants are flexible in regard to design and would appreciate comments.

The applicants stated that they may submit another design option the day of the Planning Commission work session. If one is submitted, it will be incorporated into the work session presentation.

6. Question: If some or all of the units are live-work units, is it okay to require fewer parking spaces?

Staff Comment

There is not a specific “live-work” parking requirement in the Pleasanton Municipal Code. Per the plans, 17 parking spaces are proposed. As proposed, the dwelling units would be “for sale” units with one garage parking space each. If the project were considered a ground-floor commercial project with condominiums above, the project would not meet the minimum parking requirements. Under this scenario, the Pleasanton Municipal Code would require the following:

- Residential—2 spaces per dwelling unit
- Retail—1 space per 300 sq. ft. of floor area
- Pilates Space—1 space for each employee, including instructors and administrators, and one additional space for each two students 16 years or older

From the plans provided, about 23 parking spaces (maybe more depending on the pilates schedule) would be needed: 12 for the residences, 9 for the commercial space, and at least 2 for pilates.

If the project is live-work, staff believes that may be acceptable to require fewer spaces, to account for the fact that residents live and work in the same space. At a minimum, staff believes the project should meet the residential parking requirement plus have a few spaces for customers and employees.

The applicants could apply for a few in-lieu parking spaces. The current fee for an in lieu parking space is about \$14,000.

7. Question: Should the ground floor “work” uses be restricted to art studio and similar uses, or should offices, retail, restaurants, and other types of uses allowed in the Downtown be permitted?

Staff Comment

Staff believes that most of the uses in the underlying C-C District should be allowed. Staff doesn’t believe that uses which generate hazardous waste or use hazardous materials would be appropriate.

PLEASANTON DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION

The Pleasanton Downtown Association (PDA) reviewed the preliminary proposal on October 17, 2006. The PDA was supportive of the project concept. Comments made at the meeting included the following:

- Require the property owner to record a statement acknowledging that the use is being established in the Downtown where businesses operate lawfully and may generate noise, fumes, odors, and other impacts and that he/she will not seek to impede their lawful operation. In addition, require the property owner to require any tenants to sign such a statement.

Staff Comment: Staff agrees that this would be appropriate.

- Check parking space and drive aisle dimensions

Staff Comment: The proposal does not adhere to the minimum parking space backup dimensions. The applicants will need to revise the plans to adhere to these minimum requirements.

- Signage placement for the commercial uses should be considered

Staff Comment: Staff agrees.

- The applicants should revise the proposal such that no portion of the building crosses the property line

Staff Comment: Staff agrees.

- Openings on the building need to comply with the Building Code

Staff Comment: Staff agrees.

- Consider adding an 8” planter strip on the east side of the building

Staff Comment: Staff believes decorative landscaping should be provided, where feasible, throughout the project.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of this application was published in the newspaper. At the time this report was drafted, no public comments had been received by staff. However, as stated above, the applicants expressed that the neighbor at 261 Spring Street has initial concerns about the height/mass, and location of the proposed building.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission review the proposal, hear all public testimony, and then respond with specific direction about the proposal.

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End Notes:

1. American Planning Association, *Model Smart Land Development Regulations*, March 2006