

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, October 6, 2010, for the purpose of discussing plans for Greenbelt Crossing.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:02 p.m. It was held in the Multipurpose Room of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Konrad E. Herling, Emmett V. Jordan, Leta M. Mach, Silke I. Pope, Edward V. J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts, and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Terri Hruby, Assistant Director of Planning; and Cindy Murray, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Matthew Birenbaum, President of Abbey Road Property Group; and Steven Varga, President of Enterprise Reality Services.

Ms. Hruby reported that Matthew Birenbaum, President of Abbey Road Property Group, has expressed interest in purchasing the Greenbelt Crossing property for development. The existing Declaration of Covenants and approved Detailed Site Plan for the property currently restricts development of the site to 90 multifamily dwelling units subject to either a condominium or a cooperative regime for sale to individual purchases. Although Mr. Birenbaum has indicated his interest in building a for-sale condominium project, he must be able to present a development plan that includes units being converted to rental if necessary in order to secure the project financing. Ms. Hruby advised this would require a modification to the existing covenants.

Mr. Birenbaum explained that the large number of failed condominium projects in the past few years has made it impossible to obtain construction financing for condominium or cooperative projects at this time. He said he would like the opportunity to build high quality housing designed for all age groups and then let the market determine whether they should be condominium units or rental units in the future.

Ms. Pope asked what types of units are proposed. Mr. Birenbaum said an even mix of one and two bedroom modern units with washers and dryers in each unit, separate utilities, with building space for social interaction. He said they hope to incorporate many green features in the design. Mayor Davis commented that she believed if the units were advertised as green high quality, they will sell well in this area.

Mr. Roberts said there was no need for any more apartments in the City. He mentioned the need for senior housing. Mr. Birenbaum said he thinks seniors would be interested in these units. Mr. Varga said they had spoken with almost every senior housing expert in the region about this property, but there is no financing available for senior housing. Mr. Birenbaum said he thinks seniors would be interested in renting these units and buying at a future time.

Ms. Hruby advised zoning code for rental units require fifty percent of the units to be one bedroom units but there are no bedroom number requirements for condominium units. Ms. Mach commented that two and three bedroom units would likely sell better than one bedroom units. Mr. Birenbaum said he would check with the zoning attorney regarding an exception to this requirement.

Mayor Davis said she would like to see a tenants association formed immediately if the units were rentals. She questioned whether there would be an on-site maintenance person. Mr. Birenbaum said an on-site maintenance person was normally provided for 100 units so it was possible a maintenance person would be shared with another project.

Mr. Herling questioned the timeline when conversion from rental units to sale units would occur and whether this could be included in the covenant. Mr. Birenbaum said conversion would depend entirely on market conditions but noted lenders would not finance this project if conversion was a requirement.

After further discussion, Mr. Herling, Ms. Pope, Mr. Putens, Ms. Mach, Mr. Jordan, and Mayor Davis said they preferred to have condominium or cooperative units on the site but understood the current economic situation. They said they would be open to a hybrid type approach with the units starting as rentals if necessary and then converting to sale units as market permits. Mr. Roberts said he was opposed to rental units entirely and would only support senior or cooperative housing for this project.

Mr. McLaughlin questioned at what point the covenants would need to be changed. Mr. Birenbaum said he wouldn't request any changes until he can provide more details on the project.

The meeting ended at 9:56 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Cindy Murray
City Clerk*