



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Planning Commission

**SUBJECT: PP24-002 - Pleasant Hills  
Golf Course Guiding  
Principles**

**DATE:** October 1, 2024

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**COUNCIL DISTRICT: 8**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Planning Commission voted 6-3-0 (with Tordillos, Lardinois, and Cantrell opposed) to recommend that City Council take the following action:

Consider and accept the Pleasant Hills Golf Course Guiding Principles as recommendations from the community.

## **SUMMARY AND OUTCOME**

If the City Council accepts the recommendation of the Planning Commission, the guiding principles will be considered during the formal review of a development project at the former golf course site. The Pleasant Hills Golf Course Guiding Principles are a summary of the community's key objectives and concerns for a future development at the former golf course.

## **BACKGROUND**

On September 11, 2024, the Planning Commission held a public hearing to consider the guiding principles. Commissioner Young made a motion to approve the recommendation. Commissioner Bhandal seconded the motion. Commissioner Young revised his motion for City Council to accept the guiding principles "as recommendations from the community". The motion passed 6-3-0 (Tordillos, Lardinois, and Cantrell opposed).

## **ANALYSIS**

A complete background and summary of the Pleasant Hills Golf Course Guiding Principles process is contained in the Planning Commission staff report dated September 11, 2024 (attached).

## **EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

Should the City Council accept the guiding principles, they will be considered during the review of a development permit application.

## **COORDINATION**

The preparation of this memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

This memorandum will be posted on the City's Council Agenda website for the October 8, 2024 City Council meeting.

Staff held three sets of community workshops, each on with an in-person and virtual format. Staff mailed community meeting and public hearing notices to a 2,500-foot radius. The project was posted on the City website. The staff report has been posted on the City's website and staff has been available to respond to questions from the public.

## **COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION AND INPUT**

The project was heard at the Planning Commission hearing on September 11, 2024, on the public hearing portion of the agenda, as follows:

### *Staff Presentation*

Michelle Flores, Project Manager, provided an oral presentation on the project. The presentation included the policy background that led to the community input process to develop guiding principles, this process, a summary of the community outreach, and presented the guiding principles.

### *Public Hearing*

Chair Tordillos opened the public comment portion of the agenda. Four members of the public spoke on the proposed project. The comments of the speakers are summarized below:

- A resident of the Vista Verde neighborhood expressed concerns about the project's impacts to infrastructure. He was concerned about the existing traffic in the neighborhood, especially on Tully Road, and the additional traffic the project would generate. He urged the commission to look at future redevelopment at Reid-Hillview and Eastridge and the cumulative impacts of the projects as a whole for the area.
- A representative of the Carpenters Union stated that the project should prioritize local hiring and incorporate strong labor standards. He added that this project is an opportunity to benefit the entire community.
- The executive director of Catalyze SV commended staff and the consultant for the outreach but recognized that it left out voices of people outside of the area - members who work during community meeting hours, and young community members in school. He stated that this project will build a neighborhood for 50 to 100 years from now. He stated that the principles will not decide what will be built and that it will be the developer who has already shared a plan for the project. He stated that the project is insufficient and has low density that does not meet the City's housing needs. He asked commissioners to consider the low density when they review a development permit.
- A resident of the Evergreen area shared that they purchased their home in the area with the understanding the area would remain green. She expressed concerns about the lack of maintenance of Lake Cunningham Regional Park and roads. She stated that the residents do not trust the City to maintain these spaces and expressed concerns about this project.

Chair Tordillos closed the public comment portion of the agenda.

### *Commissioner Discussion*

Vice Chair Cantrell began the discussion by asking staff to clarify what the Planning Commission would be approving and asked if this process has been done before. Staff responded that there hasn't been another project like this and stated that the guiding principles identify key objectives and concerns of the community and would be used in the review of a development permit application and help the developer design their project.

Vice Chair Cantrell asked how binding the principles would be. Staff responded that the principles are not development standards, but they are intended to guide what should be built at the site while still complying with the City's goals and policies.

Vice Chair Cantrell asked if there was a requirement for the developer to submit an application through this process. Staff clarified that the goal of the principles were to help inform the applicant on the community's priorities before submitting an application.

Vice Chair Cantrell asked, regarding the surveys, how many people live within the project noticing area and commented that the statistics on attendees wasn't reflected in the attendance. Staff responded that approximately 4,200 notices were mailed and added that staff noticed to a 2,500-foot radius, used social media, worked with two community-based organizations (CBOs), and maintained a project webpage.

Vice Chair Cantrell expressed concerns about staff's outreach to the Black community. Staff responded that they used CBOs in the two predominant languages in the community – Spanish and Vietnamese – to help reach more community members. Vice Chair Cantrell added that the project's outreach marginalized an already marginalized community. Staff responded that the process included looking at demographics to inform our outreach and acknowledged there are more communities in the neighborhood. Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement Director Chris Burton responded to Vice Chair Cantrell stating that Planning is working to update the outreach policy to better ensure they reach a wide community. He added that the current focus is on access to the process. He stated that Planning, in conjunction with the City Manager's Office, has a Racial Equity Action Plan and one of the driving principles is providing more language access outreach work.

Vice Chair Cantrell commented that the responses to the online comments bar graphs didn't seem reflective of the guiding principles. Staff responded that the guiding principles were a result of two sets of workshops and two online surveys. The bar graphs were only for the online surveys and the principles took the comments from all formats of feedback. Vice Chair Cantrell asked as an example what percentage of the participants supported a residential tower. Staff responded that in the workshop summary, it showed six people prioritized high-rise, six said it was okay to include and 73 said it should be excluded. Vice Chair Cantrell asked how the low priority for high rise would translate to higher density. Staff responded that there are ways to have higher density with smaller sized buildings but closer together that could achieve higher density.

Commissioner Lardinois expressed concerns about high vehicles miles traveled in the area. He asked about if the principles would set a parking minimum. Staff responded that the principles collected what the community would like and that they wanted a balance between under-supply and over-supply of parking and said that this process would not set parking requirements.

Commissioner Lardinois expressed concerns about the preference for low density housing and the balance of jobs and housing. He had concerns about approving these principles if it would not be fiscally positive project and asked what recommending

against the principles would mean. Staff responded that the commissioners could recommend modifications to the principles.

Commissioner Bickford asked about the next steps and how the principles would be used. Staff responded that the guiding principles are one of the items that will be weighed in the review of an application, in addition to conformance with City goals and policies and the City's priorities for density and affordability.

Commissioner Bhandal commented that he attended all the workshops and stated this outreach process could be used citywide. He stated that regardless of the density we are in a housing crisis.

Commissioner Young commended staff on the extensive outreach and noted that a project of this scope merits this process. He acknowledged the housing crisis and affordability crisis, and stated density is typically the solution. However, he acknowledged that these principles are the opinions and summary of the community's concerns and priorities. He added that he recognized the commission may have different opinions on a project and the guiding principles are a document that represent the community's thoughts, desires, and dreams of the community.

Commissioner Young made a motion to accept staff's recommendation that the Planning Commission recommend that the City Council accept the guiding principles. Commissioner Bhandal seconded the motion.

Chair Tordillos asked staff to clarify if the next step in the process would be for the City to receive an application and review it against the overriding considerations, while also using the fiscal impact study to determine if it meets the density levels necessary. Director Burton responded yes and added provided background on the history of the policies in the area. He said that during the updates to Council Policy 5-1, staff emphasized the importance of community feedback and said that the guiding principles are the method to hear the community's concerns. He noted we have a General Plan Amendment application on file and that the next steps would be to receive an Annexation application, Rezoning application, and development permit. The General Plan requires General Plan amendment to be reviewed concurrently with a development permit so City Council can review a project in their entirety.

Commissioner Barocio commended the project's outreach process and stated the process is just beginning and there will be more opportunities for staff to take the commission's recommendation and incorporate improvements to the outreach.

Commissioner Lardinois recognized the importance of acknowledging the community's feedback, but also stated that if the commission would vote to adopt guiding principles, the principles should reflect the City's vision for the site. He stated that he would be voting no due to opposing views on density on the symbolic message his vote sends. City Attorney Vera Todorov provided two alternative recommendations for the Planning

Commissioners in their recommendation to City Council. She offered the change from accept the guiding principles to:

- 1) Accept the guiding principles suggested by the community; or
- 2) Accept the guiding principles suggested by the community for consideration by City Council.

Commissioner Lardinois asked Commissioner Young if he would revise his recommendation. Commissioner Young asked the City Attorney to draft the change to the recommendation.

Chair Tordillos asked staff to clarify if a development permit application would be judged on how well they aligned to the guiding principles. Staff responded that the principles are a portion of the overriding considerations, the extensive community outreach, and the project will be reviewed against the other eight overriding considerations, including neighborhood-serving commercial, affordable housing, and the fiscal impact study.

City Attorney Todorov clarified that she revised the language to the second recommendation to recommend the City Council accept and consider the guiding principles as recommendations from the community.

Commissioner Young made a motion to amend the staff recommendation to recommend City Council consider and accept the Pleasant Hills Guiding Principles as recommendations from the community.

Vice Chair Cantrell asked how much the process cost. Staff responded this project had a budget for a consultant of approximately \$200,000 and that didn't include staff time. Vice Chair asked how many Black contractors received some of the money. Staff responded that the consultant chose the two CBOs as subconsultants, and the consultants were selected through a procurement process. Vice Chair Cantrell responded that the guiding principles process focused on the community and he added that he is a member of the community. He added he believes that the City decided to marginalize the Black community by not selecting a Black consultant. He said the department left the Black community out of the process. He stated staff needs to consciously make an effort to reach out to the Black community and staff cannot continue to say we have an equity plan. Vice Chair Cantrell added that going forward, when City Planners choose not to include people who look like him, he is going to say no until the message is clear. He clarified that he doesn't only mean to reach out to the community, but also to seek out Black contractors.

Commissioner Rosario agreed with Chair Tordillos that we will eventually have an application and the document looks like a mini-General Plan and we don't really follow our General Plan. He added that we have one chance for an opportunity at a site at this site and the applicant will propose what they want, and in the end, no one is going to get what they want.

Commissioner Oliverio provided background on the State passing Senate Bill 739 which allows owners of a golf course to convert it ministerially. He added that this bill pushed the City to pass policies to allow path for a project on a site the City previously did not want to convert. He added that staff is following the direction from City Council and did not deserve to be chastised. He said that staff are not council members and that when City Council provides direction, staff does their job, and he believes staff did their job in this process. He added that if the commissioners want to satisfy the urbanist and affordable housing, then the principles would need to have maximum density, maximum affordability, and no parking. This option would address concerns about traffic by not providing potential residents the option to have parking and people would choose to live in the area. He recognized this may create parking spillover to the surrounding neighborhood, but stated this is the conundrum the City has had on the balance of jobs and housing. He stated he would be open to the commissioners including a list of their requirements as part of the principles. He recognized that the Council was eager to expedite the process and what normally would have been a fully staff-led process, but the urgency to get this process done led to this current outreach process. He stated his support for Commissioner Young's amended recommendation.

Vice Chair Cantrell stated he agreed with most of what Commissioner Oliverio stated. He continued to express his concerns about staff not including the Black community in outreach.

Commissioner Young stated staff is following the direction of the Council and explained that cities require competitive bidding for contracts and that it is not up to staff, but up to the City Council.

Vice Chair Cantrell asked who is responsible for the outreach. Director Burton responded that he is. Vice Chair implored the director to ensure in the future that staff's outreach addresses the spirit of equity and inclusion by including the Black community. Director Burton stated that staff will work on that in its future work.

Chair Tordillos recognized the process is imperfect and the principles are not binding, but he had concerns that ratifying the principles would put the city in a path that is not in its best interest. He stated he would not be supporting the project.

Chair Tordillos called for a vote on the motion made by Commissioner Young. Commissioners Baracio, Bhandal, Bickford, Oliverio, Rosario, and Young voted yes on the item. Commissioners Tordillos, Cantrell, and Lardinois voted no on the item.

## **CEQA**

Environmental status granted by the Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement Department. Not a Project, File No. PP17-009, Staff Reports, Assessments, Annual Reports, and Informational Memos that involve no approvals of any City action.

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### **PUBLIC SUBSIDY REPORTING**

This item does not include a public subsidy as defined in section 53083 or 53083.1 of the California Government Code or the City's Open Government Resolution.

/s/

CHRIS BURTON

Secretary, Planning Commission

The principal author of this memorandum is Michelle Flores, Planner IV, Planning Building, and Code Enforcement Department. For questions, please contact [Michelle.Flores@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:Michelle.Flores@sanjoseca.gov) or (408)535-7901.

### **Attachment:**

[September 11, 2024 Planning Commission Staff Report](#)