



DEREK WESTEN
1800 JELINDA DRIVE
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA 93108

EMAIL: DEREK@WESTENLAW.COM
TELEPHONE: (805) 708-4411

July 18, 2023

City Council of the City of Goleta
Planning Commission of the City of Goleta
130 Cremona Drive
Goleta, CA 93117

Re: 7190 Hollister Avenue and Easterly Vacant Parcels (~10 acres)

Dear Mayor Perotte and Members of the City Council, and
Chair Smith and Members of the Planning Commission:

I am writing on behalf of myself and Daniel E. Hochman, the two representatives of the property owners of the captioned parcels.

We believe that the three parcels above, as initially recommended by City Planning Staff, should all be designated in the General Plan and zoning ordinance for high density housing.

For some 50 years the Girsh/Hochman and Westen families have owned three parcels of property on the north side of Hollister Avenue and west of Santa Felicia, now directly across from the Camino Real Marketplace. A portion of the westerly parcel, approximately 3 acres in size, has an older office building now occupied by the Jubilee Church; the remainder, to the north, remains undeveloped. The remaining two adjacent parcels, one approximately 4 acres and one approximately 3 acres, have never been developed and remain vacant. For convenience, we will refer to all three parcels as “the three parcels.”

Background

We have held the properties in their current state for all these years in large part because we have not seen the opportunity for their development in ways that we thought would benefit what is now the City of Goleta. The Girsh/Hochman and Westen families have are lifelong residents of Santa Barbara and still hold to the old fashioned view of trying to play a very constructive role in the building of community. You may know that we played an important role in the development and creation of the Camino Real Marketplace (the Girsh/Hochman and Westen families owned the underlying land). The Girsh/Hochman family donated the initial 12.5 acres that formed what is now the Lester A. and Viola S. Girsh Park and made doubling the size of the park possible. Derek Westen served as Chair of the Foundation for Girsh Park and was instrumental in the complex transactions that led to the beautiful park we enjoy today. And Daniel Hochman served both as Treasurer and as President as the Park came into its own. The Marketplace helped make cityhood possible.

For many years, as we have watched the remarkable achievements of the City, we have believed that the three parcels are ideally suited for high density housing. We were therefore very pleased to be informed that the three parcels had been placed on the recommended list for such zoning. And we



are surprised that, very recently, for unknown reasons, the two easterly parcels were removed from that list and placed on the Alternate list. We think that is a mistake.

High Density Housing

It goes without saying that the City has an urgent need for additional housing. Quite apart from state mandates, it is obvious that there is a need for housing. Demand is high. It is especially difficult for young people and young families, many of whom provide vital services to the community, to live in the communities to which they are contributing and that they help keep safe and vital. Only higher density housing can serve that need.

The three properties are perfectly located on a major transportation corridor, bounded on the north by the Southern Pacific Railway and Highway 101, and to the south, directly across the street from the Marketplace. With the vibrant Marketplace in place, additional commercial development is not appropriate or needed. We believe that the location of the property on a major corridor and just walking and biking distance from the Marketplace and the incredible businesses and services it provides means that traffic impacts from housing on the three properties will be less than from other properties that might be considered for housing.

And there are enormous advantages that will derive from the opportunity to master plan all three parcels together. We always resisted proposals over the years to develop just one of our parcels without master planning all three because we thought separate development was not as good either for us or for the community. The upper portion of Pacific Oaks currently ends right across from the property line dividing the approximately 3 acre parcel to the west and the two approximately 7-acre parcels to the east. If the parcels are master planned *together*, then there is an obvious opportunity to have Pacific Oaks extended partway onto the properties, straddling the boundary line, and providing outstanding access to all three parcels with the minimum of separate entrances off Hollister Avenue. If the parcels are developed separately, and especially if developed for differing uses, separate access off Hollister will be necessary, but multiple access points would be problematic, and the opportunities for master planning of external access and internal flow will be lost. Just imagine how the Marketplace would be if all the separate areas had been developed separately as strip malls, without the beautiful central area surrounded by inviting businesses!

We believe that the three properties are ideally suited for the recommended high density residential use.

ESH

For some time there has been a concern that a significant portion of the middle parcel and a small portion of the other parcels was designated as ESH, which would—if valid—significantly impact use of that portion of the property. Mark de la Garza, a highly experienced biologist and one respected by the City, has done a thorough in-the-field analysis of the property over several seasons and concluded that the designation is not accurate because, in fact, protected species are simply not present. We will



DEREK A. WESTEN

-3-

July 18, 2023

be submitting an application for updating of the General Plan asking that all but a trivial portion of the property be removed from the ESH designation. We believe the current ESH designation should not impact the zoning designation.

We will add that that elimination of the ESH designation will allow for much more attractive housing development on the three parcels. Under applicable City policies, if a portion of potentially developable housing property cannot be used because of ESH, then density can be increased on the remaining portion. It is obvious that if, instead, the housing can be master planned over a much larger area, the massing, height, and impact can all be designed to have a positive impact for the surrounding properties and the community as a whole.

Conclusion

We respectfully urge the City Council and Planning Commission to recommend that all three parcels be designated on the General Plan and then appropriately zoned for high density housing. We look forward to this Thursday's hearing and will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Derek Westen

cc. Daniel E. Hochman
City Planning Staff
Stephanie Edmondson