COUNCIL MEETING DATE:

Tuesday September 5, 2017

ADDITIONAL CORRESPONDENCE

RECEIVED AFTER COUNCIL PACKET PREPARATION

Item 5-4 – Economic Development Strategic Plan

DO NOT REMOVE

Please return to Eileen Harrington, Administration
Please forward my attached comments to the Council and to the Economic Development Committee. I am unable to attend tonight’s City Council meeting.

Thank you,

Ed Fields
September 5, 2017

To: Albany City Council, Economic Development Committee

From: Ed Fields

Re: City Council Agenda Item 5-4, Economic Development Strategic Plan

The Economic Development Strategic Plan states: “New policies supporting infill development, consistent with General Plan goals, are appropriate, as is targeting commodity or specialty retail, as the case might be for a given location, for business attraction.”

In the Strategic Plan there are several mentions of “undertaking a San Pablo Avenue Area Plan with EIR” or preparing “a targeted and focused update to the 1993 San Pablo Avenue Urban Design Concept Plan and Design Guidelines.” Included is mention of studying “the possibility of extending mixed-use zoning through the parcels to Kains and Adams in certain locations.”

Extending the commercial component through the block to currently residentially-zoned parcels on Kains and Adams was considered a number of years ago and was rejected. This is not supported by the General Plan.

Extending the residential component of a mixed use development through the block is provided for in the current Zoning Code, and has been done in several developments already.

A reason cited in the Strategic Plan is the need to allow for parking lots associated with new mixed use development (specifically the commercial part). General Plan Policy LU-3.2: San Pablo Avenue, reads, “Continue to foster the transformation of San Pablo Avenue from an auto-oriented commercial strip to a pedestrian- and transit-oriented retail boulevard,” although Policy LU-3.12: Lot Consolidation, states, “Support the consolidation of underutilized parcels on the Solano and San Pablo corridors to create sites that are more viable for future mixed use development, including on-site parking.” Our current Zoning Code permits parking associated with a mixed use development on the residentially-zoned portion of the development.

However, no reference was made to Policy LU-3.8: Buffering, “Require buffering of residential uses, particularly along Kains Avenue, Adams Street, and the perpendicular side streets that intersect Solano Avenue, from the potentially adverse impacts created by nearby commercial activities. This should include special setback and daylight plane regulations to be applied where commercial zones abut lower density zones. It may also include special use, design, and noise standards.”

A few comments on the UC Village development may also be in order. As was pointed out, the rents are about triple what might be found elsewhere on San Pablo Avenue in Albany, and so are attractive only to chain stores. Two of these, the veterinary hospital and the pet supply store, compete directly with established local businesses across Marin Avenue. The bulk of the project, Belmont Village and the Sprouts store turned to face its parking lot, provide little activity along San Pablo Avenue, what used to be called by planners “a dead zone”, now termed an “inactive use.”