

EMERYVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION

STAFF REPORT

Agenda Date: April 26, 2012

Report Date: April 19, 2012

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Planning and Building Department
Miroo Desai, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: **Study Session: Emeryville Center of Community Life (ECCL)
(UPDR12-001)**

PROJECT LOCATION: West Side of San Pablo Avenue between 47th and 53rd Streets
(APN: 13-1182-5-3, -8-4, and 23-4; 49-1181-1; 49-1182-15-8)

APPLICANTS/ OWNERS: Emery Unified School District/Roy Miller
4727 San Pablo Avenue
Emeryville, CA 94608

City of Emeryville/Melinda Chinn
4321 Salem Street
Emeryville, CA 94608

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: A study session on a proposal to redevelop the Emery Secondary School site to accommodate a 115,100 square foot multi-story multi-use facility on a site of about 7.6 acres on the block bounded by San Pablo Avenue on the east, 47th Street on the south, 53rd Street on the north, and Emery Bay Village on the west. The proposal will co-locate the elementary and secondary schools and accommodate the City's community services and recreation programs. The campus will be built in two phases and will be operated jointly by the Emery Unified School District and the City of Emeryville.

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION: Public (P)/Neighborhood Retail Overlay (NR)

ZONING DISTRICT: Public (P)/Neighborhood Retail Overlay (NR)
Maximum Building Height: 30 feet (can be increased to 55 feet with a Conditional Use Permit and the provisions of public benefits)

Building Intensity (FAR): 1.2 (can be increased to 1.6 with a Conditional Use Permit and the provision of public benefits)

ENVIRONMENTAL

STATUS: Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration to be prepared by Emery Unified School District as lead agency.

RECOMMENDED

COMMISSION ACTION: 1) To hear a presentation of the proposed project.
2) To provide direction and comment to the applicant and staff.

BACKGROUND

For several years the city, school district, and Emeryville community, through the Education and Youth Services Advisory Committee and its successor, Partners for Community Life, have been planning for a new multi-purpose multi-generational facility called the Center of Community Life. A number of alternative sites and programs have been considered, finally settling on a new complex to be built on the Secondary School site on San Pablo Avenue between 47th and 53rd Streets.

The Emeryville Center of Community Life (ECCL) project is included in the current City of Emeryville Capital Improvement Program and will address the lack of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities within the community. The project will allow the City to develop a permanent facility for Community Services programs, which are currently housed in temporary modular buildings, and will allow the Emery Unified School District (EUSD) to build a new pre-kindergarten through 12th grade school campus.

A program plan for the project was developed in 2003. In 2007 the School Board authorized the issuance of a Request for Proposals for architectural design services for program refinement of the 2003 program plan, conceptual design schemes and cost estimates for the project. An architect selection committee was formed to review the proposals and select a finalist. The committee through consensus chose Field Paoli Architects who were authorized to commence work in April 2008.

At the time of RFP, the intended site for the project was the land owned by PG&E, and located on the west side of Hollis Street between Park Avenue and 53rd Street. The project consultant proposed that the site of Emery Secondary School also be considered for a new center, because it already belonged to the School District, and would result in substantial savings both in terms of project cost and schedule. The City/Schools Committee considered the suggestion and determined that this would be the preferred location. Subsequently, Field Paoli generated four alternative plans, all based on the Emery Secondary School site. These four plans were presented to the City/Schools Committee and the Partners for Community Life. Upon further review including finance and budget review, a decision was made regarding a particular scheme that included 180,000 square feet of building space and retention of the existing gymnasium and

swimming pool. This proposal was reviewed by the Planning Commission at a study session in October 2009. That proposal for a Master Plan for ECCL was then approved by the City Council and the School Board hired Nexus Partners to design and build the project.

PROJECT PROPOSAL:

The proposal is to redevelop the Emery Secondary School site to accommodate an 115,100 square foot multi-story multi-use facility on a site of about 7.6 acres that is currently occupied by Emery Secondary School. The proposal will co-locate the elementary and secondary schools and accommodate the City's adult and youth services programs. The campus will be built in two phases and will be operated jointly by the Emery Unified School District and the City of Emeryville.

The existing outdoor recreation facilities, including swimming pool, sport fields, running track, playgrounds and basketball courts would be renovated and modified. The site facilities will be used during the day, evening, and weekends with the center expected to operate daily from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. year around with the highest usage during the school year (September to June).

Phasing:

The project is anticipated to be constructed in two phases. During the first phase, all existing buildings except the gymnasium and the pool will be demolished and 104,600 square feet of new construction will occur. (See Page 2 and 3 of attached plans). During Phase II, an additional 34,670 square feet of new construction will occur that will accommodate a new gymnasium for school use only, theater and new classrooms (See Page 5). Phase I is expected to be completed in August 2015 with all K-12 grades located at the new campus. Occupation of the campus by administration and community services groups may be staggered through the development of Phase I, depending on the ultimate construction sequence. Total enrollment in grades K-12 is expected to be 780 students in Phase I and up to 1,120 students in Phase II.

Conceptual Design:

The building massing is concentrated along the 47th and San Pablo frontages and maintains an open space configuration along 53rd Street and the boundary with Emery Bay Village. With the exception of the gymnasium and the swimming pool, all existing buildings will be demolished. See Page 2 of attached plans for the existing site plan.

Page 3 of attached plans shows six new buildings that encircle a "community commons" area that is envisioned to be open to the community during school hours and will support casual and programmed activities. The high school (grades 9-12) classrooms will be accommodated in a two-story building fronting 47th Street while classrooms for kindergarten to grade 8 are accommodated in a separate two story building fronting the playgrounds. The administrative space for both the EUSD and the City Community Services Department will be housed in a two story building fronting San Pablo Avenue. Adjacent to the 9-12 grade building is a Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (S.T.E.A.M) Center which also houses the community

library. The corner of 53rd Street and San Pablo Avenue is occupied by the Community Multi-purpose building. The School multi-purpose room is sited adjacent to the K-8 building. The existing sports field retains its existing configuration with additional play areas for specific grades sited around the sports field. Thirty-four on-site parking spaces are sited along 47th Street between the gymnasium and the S.T.E.A.M Center. Page 4 of attached plans shows how the spaces are divided between school and community operations during school hours.

Page 5 shows development in Phase II that includes replacement of the on-site grade parking and basketball courts with a new school gym, a theater, classroom space and expanded 55 space covered parking lot. Page 6 shows how the spaces are divided between school and community operations during school hours.

Pages 7-9 illustrate the use of space within the buildings by floor. Pages 10-13 provide building massing in both phases. Pages 14-17 provide conceptual elevations. Pages 18-19 show site sections which illustrate the height of the proposed buildings. The prevailing building height along San Pablo Avenue is 30 feet up to a maximum of 48 feet toward the interior of the site.

Dedicated and Share Program Space:

Some space within the buildings and recreation areas will be shared between the School District and City’s Community Services Department. The table below identifies spaces that will be shared and spaces that will be dedicated for exclusive use of one jurisdiction.

	School District	City’s Community Services
Dedicated Space	Portion of classrooms, primarily for grades K-3, school offices and support areas	City services administrative and support areas
Shared Space	<u>After school hours use with City:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some classrooms, science and language labs, music rooms, school multi-use rooms, library, café, teaching kitchen and conference rooms. ● K-8 play areas and hard courts, sports fields and running track, and student social spaces at grade and terrace levels 	<u>Upon mutual agreement during school hours:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gymnasiums, fitness and dance rooms, community multi-use space, community library, family resource center/wellness center, dental clinic, teen center, arts and music studios, café, senior lounge, teaching kitchen and conference rooms ● Community Commons, plazas and pool area

Attached to the staff report is a detailed spreadsheet that provides ECCL’s space program by each room.

Design and Green Elements

The architectural character is to be determined, but a series of perspective sketches have been created to give a general sense of scale and feel of the proposed facility (See Pages 20-23). During the next phases of design, the concept will be further refined to address aesthetics, color and material scheme. The applicant is seeking the highest LEED equivalent rating that the project budget will allow. All green building elements including green roofs will be considered although many of these elements have an initial first cost premium and may not be achievable unless additional funding is secured.

Circulation and Parking

There are four community public access portals – three along San Pablo Avenue and one on 47th Street (See Page 19). School entries are located on 47th and 53rd Streets. Drop off for K-8 students will occur on 53rd Street and that for grades 9-12 will be on 47th Street. K-8 drop off and pick up will have 480 lineal feet of passenger drop-off curb along the southern edge of 53rd Street. A turn-around is proposed at 53rd Street near Boyer Street to facilitate safe turning to approach the drop-off area (See Page 27). 47th Street would provide additional drop-off area for high school students and community members. Loading and deliveries will also occur off 47th Street.

Page 19 shows how the internal circulation is anticipated and areas where public access will be restricted during school hours.

Thirty-four on-site parking spaces will be provided off 47th Street in Phase I. In Phase II a covered on-grade 55-car parking structure will be constructed. The on-street parking on 47th Street will be reconfigured to increase capacity to provide 93 spaces (See Page 30).

Landscape Plan

Page 29 illustrates preliminary Landscape program elements. These include play areas for different student groups, landscape elements in the community courtyard including amphitheater stage and seating, and a Temescal “creek” landscape feature on the north side of the fence along 53rd Street.

There are some existing mature trees within the site. At this point, an accurate survey of the trees has not occurred. A tree survey will be done. Should the trees be located where it makes sense from a planning and programming and engineering perspective to retain them applicant will do so. Similarly a study will be done for the existing trees along San Pablo and 47th street. The survey will evaluate both the health of the tree(s) and suitability of the species for high-traffic areas which can lead to heavy soil compaction around the root system.

Playgrounds

The existing play fields will be renovated to accommodate about 93,000 sq. ft. of athletic field and 42,000 square feet of dedicated K-8 play areas (See Page 24).

CONFORMITY TO LAND USE POLICIES:

Land Use: The Land Use category for the site is “Public” which allows for the proposed educational and community uses by right.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR): The Floor Area ratio for the site is 1.2 that can be increased to bonus FAR of 1.6 with a conditional use permit and the provision of specified public benefits. The proposed FAR for the project in Phase I is 0.35 (115,100/327,000 sq. ft.) and 0.46 (149,770/327,000) in Phase II. It therefore, meets the permitted FAR allowed by right.

Height: The site falls within the 30 foot height district that can be increased to the bonus height of 55 feet with a conditional use permit and the provision of specified public benefits. The proposed heights of the buildings in the facility vary between 30 feet to a maximum height of 48 feet. The project will, therefore, require a use permit for proposed height. The proposal includes a new city library, a new community multi-purpose building, “community commons” and a new community wellness center that would qualify as “bonus” for building height exceeding 30 feet.

Parking: The proposal co-locates kindergarten through 12 grade classrooms as well a number of community service facilities. In addition, there will be facilities shared by the school and city services. Section 9-4.55.9 of the Zoning Ordinance (“Parking Requirements for Unspecified Uses”) allows the Planning Commission, upon recommendation of City Staff, to determine the parking requirements for an unlisted use. This Section would be appropriate in this case since the Zoning Ordinance does not specify a parking requirement for a shared community facility such as ECCL. Fehr and Peers have conducted a parking analysis for the proposal (attached). The parking demand assessment calculates the peak parking demand to be 180 parking spaces. The proposal provides 34 on-site parking spaces in Phase I and 55 spaces in Phase II. If on-street parking spaces on 47th and 53rd Streets and San Pablo Avenue is considered then the parking increases to 189 spaces in Phase I and 219 in Phase II. However, zoning regulations do not allow inclusion of street parking to meet parking requirements. The project will, therefore, require a variance. In addition, while the concept of permit parking for school staff has been previously discussed for 47th Street, this has not been previously considered for 53rd Street or San Pablo Avenue. The Fehr and Peers study concludes that the peak parking demand for staff and service vehicles is about 110 spaces; this could be accommodated in the on-site parking lot and with permit parking along 47th Street. The remainder of the peak demand, which is visitor and library parking, could be accommodated partially along 47th Street, with the remainder on San Pablo Avenue and 53rd Street, if spaces are available.

Stormwater Requirements: The project site is greater than 10,000 square feet; therefore stormwater requirements will apply to this project.

Environmental Review: A Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) is currently under preparation by the School District. The MND will need to be approved by the Planning Commission as a “Responsible Agency” prior to the approval of the project, following its certification by the School Board.

Permits Required: The project will require a Conditional Use Permit for height, a parking variance and a Design Review Permit for new construction. It may be noted that the project will not require a building permit from the City Building Division. As this is considered primarily a school facility, all building permits will be handled by the Department of the State Architect.

Process: Regardless of comments received at the Study Session, the project will need to undergo a permit review process. Submission of a formal application and additional project information and analysis may raise issues not identified in this report. These will be identified and addressed in the staff report when the project is brought back to the Commission for a hearing and decision.

Community Outreach: The applicant has conducted seven public workshops to solicit community input regarding programming and design. An additional six workshops are scheduled over the next several months.

STAFF COMMENTS:

The project was reviewed at the March 14, 2012 Development Coordinating Committee meeting. A variety of concerns were raised. A number of clarifying questions and concerns were raised regarding sharing of common spaces between high school and elementary school students given the size of the facility and proximity of “play areas” and common plazas. Public Works staff commented that the traffic study should analyze pedestrian safety issues for street crossing on San Pablo Avenue. In addition, a street lighting plan would be needed at the time of approval. A need for bike parking on 53rd Street was identified. It was also noted that greater detail was needed to for treatment of Temescal Creek on 53rd Street. There was a concern regarding the design and programming of the amphitheater. The lower level of the amphitheater seemed to be below the street level and it was noted that it should be checked against the water table in this area. In addition, it was noted that programming of this space should be done at the design stage in order to ensure that that space is designed for electrical and sound needs. There was a general concern regarding the fact that the “community commons” would be off-limits to students during school hours as this maybe not be possible or desirable to enforce.

ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED:

Parking: As noted earlier, the project does not provide adequate on-site parking in either phase and relies on on-street parking to meet the needs. Staff requests that the Commission give direction regarding the need for a parking variance.

Height Bonus: The project requires a Conditional Use Permit and the provision of two public benefits for the proposed increase in height from 30 feet to 48 feet. Staff has identified public open space and public right-of-way improvements to qualify for this bonus height, and requests

that the Commission give direction as to whether this is sufficient, or whether other features of the project should be counted towards the bonus height. Note that Section 9-4.607(c) allows the Planning Commission to determine that “one public benefit is sufficiently ‘significant’ and ‘substantially beyond normal requirements’ so as to warrant the granting of all or part of the full bonus”.

Pedestrian Experience: The pedestrian experience on San Pablo Avenue cannot be assessed at this time as the buildings have not been fully designed. Staff requests that the Commission give direction regarding how to ensure a pleasant pedestrian experience, such as large windows.

Amphitheater: Staff requests that the Commission give direction regarding whether programming of space at the amphitheater should be identified at the entitlement stage to ensure that the space is designed for electrical and sound needs.

Community Commons: Staff requests that the Commission give direction regarding whether it is appropriate to keep the “community commons” off limits to students, especially high school students, during school hours.

RECOMMENDATION:

After hearing a presentation from the applicant and receiving public testimony, staff requests that the Planning Commission provide comment and direction regarding the above issues and any other issues that the Commission identifies.

Attachments:

Parking Assessment
Design Narrative including Program Space Spreadsheet
ECCL plans