

September 5, 2023

To: Planning Commission
Nick Zornes, Development Services Director
City Council: Jonathan Weinberg and Nessa Filgor

As a resident in the immediate area of Rancho Shopping Center, I urge the Planning Commission to think carefully about allowing the center to be re-zoned for new housing. These are my concerns:

- Contrary to what is stated in the *Daily Post* article of Sept. 2-3, the center is located in the midst of a single-family neighborhood, no different than many other Los Altos neighborhoods in that respect. The closest existing multi-unit housing is 1.25 miles away on the other side of El Monte Avenue.
- High-density housing on the center's property would exponentially increase traffic, congestion, and noise in the neighborhood to extremely high levels. The present suburban neighborhood has been one of primarily single-story homes on relatively large lots, with many mature trees, since its original development in the 1940s and '50s; but in contrast, with high-density multi-story housing, the neighborhood would become an urban environment. Residents adjacent to the center would lose backyard privacy and views. Berry Avenue traffic would be especially increased. And have you seen northbound Foothill Expressway on weekday mornings, even now?
- Contrary to what the *Daily Post* implies, the shopping center is quite busy and active with both pedestrian and vehicle traffic during the day. Loss of walkable shopping would be a hugely significant disadvantage for Rancho area residents. While there is some tenant turnover, as the article states, I suspect the turnover rate is lower than in commercial downtown Los Altos.
- It's likely that in order to handle the increased traffic of multiple additional households, a stoplight would have to be installed at Berry and Springer, and possibly another at Berry and Riverside, adding to the urbanization that has long been antithetical to Los Altos.
- The center's architecture is unique and very appealing to many. There is no other shopping center in the greater peninsula area with a wood-shake roof, wooden beams, round wooden pillars, casement windows, etc. A product of 1950 Los Altos, the design of the center reflects that era's lifestyle, which initially attracted many of us to Los Altos and which we would like to see maintained. Once torn down, it could never be rebuilt, and a part of Los Altos history would be forever destroyed.
- And finally, feedback from neighboring residents about this major zoning change proposal should be solicited. Why was no advance notice given of the Planning Commission's consideration of it and announced in the Palo Alto Daily (in print with no link and no Los Altos news outlets) on the Friday of a three-day weekend prior to going before the City Council that next Thursday?

Please give the above points your serious consideration. I will also point out that Woodland Plaza is not as closely bordered by residential property and would be a preferable location for high-density housing since it would have less impact on the neighborhood and other potential areas, such as along El Camino Real. Downtown Los Altos could also be further explored.

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