

September 5, 2023

To: Planning Commission,
City Council,
Nick Zornes, Development Services Director

Regarding: Removing limits on density at Rancho Shopping Center

We are absolutely against the Planning Commission getting rid of the limits on density at Rancho Shopping Center:

- The surrounding streets and current neighborhoods cannot support the increase in density. The increase traffic, congestion, and noise in the neighborhood is beyond what is tolerable, let alone safe.
- Unfortunately, the City has already over-burdened the area by allowing the Pinewood schools to expand. This has already brought an increase in traffic, noise, pollution and water usage, etc. The number of cars at pick-up and drop-off times and during the School's increasingly frequent events is a burden on the neighborhood and we don't believe the neighborhood can support additional density.
- 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's 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. According to Los Altos own vision document it is important to preserve the village character of Los Altos. Once torn down, it could never be rebuilt, and a part of Los Altos history would be forever destroyed. Perhaps it should become a historical landmark.
- Rancho is a community center and a place of gathering for the neighborhood. In addition to the retail, there are areas of grass and outdoor seating. Many people, including our older citizens, rely on the center for a safe place to interact, sit and have a cup of coffee, and to purchase quality groceries. Removing the current retail (even during the interim) will have a strong negative impact. Increasing the density will not provide for open air areas for the neighborhood to congregate.
- And finally, feedback from neighboring residents about this major zoning change proposal should be solicited. Why wasn't advance notice given?

Downtown Los Altos, surrounding parts of San Antonio Road, El Camino etc. are a better fit for increases in density.

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