GRASS VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT
MARCH 21, 2006 MEETING

Agenda Item   11.1 (A & B)
To: Grass Valley Planning Commission
From: Dan Chance, Associate Planner
Reviewed by: Tom Last, Planning Director
Approved By: Joe C. Heckel, Community Development Director
Application: Tentative Map 04PLN-09, Planned Unit Development 04PLN-35 and Rezone 05-PLN-05
Subject: Study Session for the Ridge Village subdivision of 10.63 acres into 50 residential lots and the construction of 49 detached single family residential units and related improvements located northerly of Ridge Road and easterly of Slate Creek Road/ Review State Density Bonus.

Data Summary

Location: 2418 Ridge Road and 1039 Slate Creek Road
Assessor's Parcel No.: 08-060-16, 31 and 08-050-05
Applicant/Owner: California Timber Company/ Ron Westfall
Representative: Andy Cassano, Nevada City Engineering
Zoning: R-1 (Single Family Residence) District
General Plan: Urban High Density & Urban Low Density
Environmental Status: This is a project subject to CEQA review. A Negative Declaration has been prepared and circulated for public comment.

I. Recommendation: Conduct a preliminary review of the proposal prior to its formal consideration by the Planning Commission on April 18, 2006. Although this item has been scheduled as a study session and the discussion is intended to be informational, the Planning Commission would be forwarding a recommendation to the City Council concerning the State density bonus provisions that allows 7 additional units for the project.

Staff recommends the Planning Commission:
1) Allow for a presentation by staff of the proposal, its current status and any issues that will need to be evaluated and addressed;
2) Following the presentation and any input from applicant, provide an opportunity for questions or comments by the Planning Commission on the project; and,
3) Forward a recommendation to the City Council concerning the State density bonus and its application to this project.

II. Background: Attached for your consideration are plans submitted by California Timber Company for three properties located northerly of Ridge Road and easterly of
Slate Creek Road. On February 27, 2004 the tentative map application was submitted, on August 3, 2004, the Planned Unit Development application was submitted, and on December 20, 2004 a Rezone application submitted. Following submittal of further information, the project was deemed complete on April 5, 2005. An Initial Study and Negative Declaration was prepared and circulated for 30-days from July 19 to August 19, 2005. The Planning Commission reviewed the proposed project during a study session on November 15, 2005. Issues raised during that meeting include the layout of the project, design of the single family residences, the number of units, and the affordability of the units. The Planning Commission minutes are attached in Attachment 7. A master plan has been prepared that identifies the design of the residential units; examples of the proposed landscaping; and the design along the Ridge Road Frontage.

The project is located in one of the areas that were identified as having inconsistent General Plan and Zoning District designation. On February 28, 2006, the City Council adopted the General Plan Amendment changing the land use designation on this property from Urban High Density to Urban Low Density. The General Plan Amendment makes the property consistent with the existing R-1 (Single Family Residence) zoning district.

III. Project Description and Environmental Setting: The applicant proposes to subdivide and develop approximately 10.6 acres within the city limits of the City of Grass Valley. The project site currently consists of three assessor’s parcels, one of which supports an existing single family residence. The project proponent seeks approval to subdivide approximately 8.6 acres of the site into 50 residential lots and common areas. The existing single family residence on the property would be located on lot 50, with this project. The remaining 2 acres of the site would be kept by the owner, and become an open space parcel, with a potential for recreational uses.

Residential construction is proposed to include detached single family houses. Most units are proposed to be clustered throughout the project site along the two primary roadways, with walkways provided to accommodate pedestrian activity. Four units are proposed to front on Ridge Road on larger lots. The proposed project includes creation of a Home Owners Association (HOA) for the Ridge Village Development. The Ridge Village HOA would be responsible for maintenance of all common areas, such as driveways, open space, and landscaped areas. Individual lot owners would be responsible for maintenance of their own yards and fences.

The project applicant proposes to improve the northern portion of Ridge Road along the project site frontage to City standards. This will require provision of curbs, gutters, and sidewalks. The primary roadway into the site is proposed from Ridge Road and loops through the property, as well as providing an alternative access to Slate Creek Road. Internal roadways would extend between the primary roadways. The roadway is proposed in a 37-foot easement that includes two (10-feet wide) lanes, and an 8-foot street parking area along one side. A 4-foot sidewalk on one side of the road and curbs and gutters are included in the 37-foot easement. In addition, a 10-foot wide alley would be provided for those three units along Ridge Road, as well as four units located behind. The proposed roadway would be dedicated to the city and publicly maintained.
The properties to the north of this site may have significant access constraints, as well as line of sight issues. The project would be conditioned to include wording in the CC&R’s that the project may be required to provide access to some of those properties to the north.

Deekin Court is a privately-maintained two-lane unpaved driveway located along the east side of the property which provides access to several properties to the northeast of the project site. The Deekin Court driveway would remain with the proposed project; however, due to existing line of sight issues at the Deekin Court and Ridge Road intersection, gates are proposed to restrict access from the project. Deekin Court would provide an emergency access to the project. The City Engineer has requested the Deekin Court roadway be removed for safety reasons and all future access be provided through the Ridge Village. In addition, if Deekin Court is to remain, the City Fire Department would require significant street improvements to Deekin Court on the projects property.

The residential lots are proposed to be served by public water and sewer. Water supply is provided from the NID. The existing water supply infrastructure is located in the Ridge Road right-of-way. The project proposes to tie into that infrastructure. This will require removing existing pavement on Ridge Road, trenching to and through the project site, installing the pipeline, and restoring ground conditions (i.e., repaving and revegetating).

Currently, there is no public sewer service on the project site. The project proponent proposes connecting to the existing sewer lines located along Slate Creek Road.

IV. Environmental Status: The City prepared an Initial Study for the project in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. The study revealed the project may result in significant impacts on the environment, but mitigation measures have been provided to reduce these impacts to a level that is less than significant. Therefore, a Mitigated Negative Declaration is proposed to be adopted as part of the project approval. The Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration were circulated for a 30-day public review period starting on July 19, 2005 and ending on August 19, 2005. The City did not receive any additional comments from agencies or the public that require a change to the Mitigated Negative Declaration.

Based on the Traffic Study or Volume/Capacity Analysis (VCA) prepared for the project with 49-single family residences, it was determined that this project would generate 457 daily trips and 48 P.M. peak hour trips.

The project originally consisted of 56-detached residential units. A Traffic Report was prepared for the project which determined the 56-units would significantly impact two identified critical intersections (the East Main Street / Idaho Maryland Road / State Route 20/49 intersection & the Ridge Road / Sierra College Road intersection). The project was reduced to 49-units which the traffic study identified impacts at only one intersection (the Ridge Road / Sierra College Road). A Mitigation Measure has been added requiring those improvements to the Ridge Road / Sierra College Road
The project would be conditioned to pay both regional and local traffic impact fees.

V. General Plan Analysis: The Grass Valley 2020 General Plan identifies the site as Urban Low Density. The Urban Low Density allows 4 units per acre, which would allow 42 units on this property. The General Plan indicates that the most appropriate zoning district is the Single Family Residence “R-1” District. The placement of residential uses in Urban Low Density land use designation in this area is an appropriate use. The project would be consistent with the General Plan designation. Related General Plan goals, objectives or policies that relate to the proposed project are as follows:

1-LUP Maintain a General Plan that reflects the needs of the total community, including residents, business and industry.
4-HP Enhance the appearance of City entryways, commercial areas, and streetscapes, in part through the use of elements in the design standards that complement Grass Valley’s historic heritage.
28-LUP Promote the construction of affordable housing utilizing the techniques and approaches described in this General Plan.
1-CDG Preserve and enhance the existing community.
6-CDO Improvement of the appearance of entrances to the community, Downtown, other neighborhoods and commercial districts.

In addition, the City’s Housing Element encourages the planned unit development process to provide a range of housing types and densities within a single development.

The City’s Affordable Housing Program Guidelines and policies that have been adopted by the City in the past require Planned Unit Developments to provide 20% affordable units at either 80% (Low), 100% (median) or 120% (moderate). The project proposes 50 residential units (49 new and 1 existing residential unit), however only the 42 units were proposed to be counted against the 20% set-aside under the City’s affordability process. The additional seven units are part of the State Density Bonus and would not be calculated as part of the for the City’s Affordable Housing Program Guidelines and policies.

This is the first project to include both the City’s Affordable Housing Program Guidelines and policies and the State Density Bonus (Section VIII). After reviewing the applicant’s request for the density bonus and the housing needs for Grass Valley, Staff proposes the following approach for addressing how the 20% set-aside would be applied to the 42 units:

- 8 units at 120% of Median Income (Moderate)

By offering a mix of income types for this project, the City can address different income levels and be responsive to the issues raised by the applicant. The Housing Element encourages the City to make provisions for affordable workforce housing units and a mix of housing types.
VI. Zoning Analysis: The property is zoned “R-1” Single Family Residence District. Residential use is an allowed use. This project exceeds and maximum density, which would allow 42 dwelling units, therefore, the applicant is requesting a density bonus which is discussed in Section VIII. The proposed density for the 50 single family residential units is 9,260 square feet per dwelling unit. The project meets the City of Grass Valley’s development standards for the Single Family Residence Zoning District. The design of the residential development is consistent with the City Design Guidelines.

The project includes the submittal of a Planned Unit Development (PUD) and a Tentative Subdivision Map. The purpose of the PUD is to allow greater flexibility of the development standards (i.e. setbacks, height, etc.). As part of this project, the size of the residential lots would be reduced, which requires a reduction of the residential setbacks. Even though the size of the lots is reduced, a common area is to be established around the residential units. The intent of this PUD is to provide:

- Affordable housing, and
- Designing a modern and unique development, while maintaining consistency with the General Plan.

The project includes a Planned Unit Development to allow the project design to vary from established City of Grass Valley development standards. The proposed residential lots range between 3,200 square feet and 9,700 square feet, while the minimum allowed lot size in the R-3 zone without the Planned Unit Development overlay zone is 10,000 square feet.

The required off-street parking space requirements for the proposed residential development is 100, the plan indicates approximately 150 off-street, as well as on-street parking throughout the project.

VII. Summary of Issues for Discussion: The application for the Ridge Village Development represents a project of sufficient size and magnitude that a preliminary review before the Planning Commission was warranted. The report notes that there will be a number of items that will be further evaluated and, potentially mitigated through conditions, as the project advances to a public hearing before the Planning Commission and finally the City Council. The items or issues that will be focused upon in an upcoming Planning Commission meeting include:

1) Acceptability of the layout/design of the overall subdivision.
2) Acceptability of the design/architecture for building and landscaping of the site.
3) Need to designate the remainder parcel and define use.

At the close of the study session, it is requested that the Planning Commission provide comments or direction to staff on the project or on the issues listed above, and formal review at the April 18, 2006 Planning Commission Meeting.
VIII. Density Bonus: In addition, the applicant is requesting a density bonus that would allow 7 additional residential units for the project. In order to gain these 7 additional units, the applicant proposes to provide 5 low income units or 10 moderate income units. (See Attachment 5)

Under the provisions of the State Density Bonus, a project proponent may request additional residential units, when a percentage of those units are affordable. The State Density Bonus requires 5 units to be provided at 80% of the median income (Low) or 10 units at 120% of the median income (Moderate). The addition of these 7 units would bring the total number of residential units to 49 new units. A summary of the housing unit count and how the bonus density is proposed for this project is provided below:

**Summary of Allowable Density and Application of State Bonus Density**

*What is Allowed by Current R-1 Zoning*
- Number of Units Allowed by R-1 Zoning = 42 units
- Affordable Units Required by City Setaside Program = 8 units (part of 42)

*What is Allowed with State Bonus Density*
- Additional Market Units allowed by Bonus Density = 7 units
- Number of Units of project with Bonus Density = 49 units
- Affordable Units required by Bonus Density = 5 Low or 10 Mod

If the Bonus Density were to be applied, the total number of affordable units for the 49 unit project would be either 13 or 18 housing units.

The Planning Commission should make a recommendation to the City Council to accept the State Density Bonus and allow the additional seven units.

**Attachments:**
1. Location Map
2. Site (APN) Map
3. General Plan 2020 Map
4. Site Plan and Elevations
5. Applicant’s Letter requesting State Density Bonus
6. Excerpt from November 15, 2005 Planning Commission Meeting

**cc:** Applicant
- Andy Cassano, Nevada City Engineering, Inc
- Jeff Helm, Aztec Real Estate and Development
- Ron Westfall, California Timber and Land