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New Poway Road development gains early council support



Drawing of what The Trading Post development would look like from Poway Road. (City of Poway /)

By **Steve Dreyer**

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Members of the City Council on Tuesday night gave glowing preliminary support to what could become a precedent-setting mixed-use development proposal along Poway Road.

There's still a long approval road ahead for the developers, but the council provided mostly positive feedback during a non-voting workshop session on the idea of building two three-story structures and one two-story structure on 1.58 acres containing the former Poway News Chieftain and Poway Irrigation buildings.

Poway Property LP wants to build 40,000 square feet of commercial space with 53 residential units and two levels of underground parking. The development has been labeled “The Trading Post.” The limited partnership includes Marco DeDominicis of Poway and Trent Claughton of Alberta, Canada.

Building 1 would be a 30-foot-tall, two-story structure. There would be a 12,000-square-foot “food hall” on the first floor, 6,000 square feet of office-commercial space and a 6,000-square-foot patio on the second floor. Urge Gastropub has been identified as being interested in the food space.

Building 2 would be a three-story, 30-foot-tall residential building with four, three-bedroom “live-work” units and two, three-bedroom townhomes.

Building 3 would be a three-story, 40-foot-tall structure with a 20,000-square-foot fitness center, 33 two-bedroom apartments, 10 one-bedroom apartments and four three-bedroom townhomes. The developers said they are working with Crunch Fitness on the gym space.

Building heights facing Poway Road would not exceed 36 feet, exceeding current city standards by one foot.

Parking for 348 vehicles would be provided, including 332 below ground and 16 at ground level. The underground garage would take up the entire project site. The proposed revised specific plan standards would require 292 spaces for a project of this scope, according to Joe Lim, the city’s planning director.

While mixed uses are allowed under city codes, the proposal at 33.5 units per acre, exceeds the current 20-units-per-acre density levels but would be below the anticipated levels of between 30 and 40 units proposed to be incorporated into the revised Poway Road Specific Plan, Lim said. The same applies to building heights. The council will discuss changes to the specific plan at an Aug. 2 workshop.

“Everything about this project sizzles,” Mayor Steve Vaus remarked. “I can’t wait to see it take the next step.”

“This could be the springboard to everything along Poway Road that we’ve talked about,” Councilman John Mullin agreed.

Councilman Barry Leonard also praised the conceptual plans, saying he liked that the wide pedestrian area between the buildings, called paseos, would draw neighbors to the new Poway Road businesses.

To Powegians who might think the project is out of character with how Poway Road looks now, Leonard said, “Folks in Poway don’t like change, but folks in Poway don’t like driving by blight.”

Councilman Dave Grosch said the project looks good on paper, but urged the developers to make sure this first attempt to upgrade the city’s main thoroughfare is “a home run.”

“You’re the guiding light. You set the tone,” Grosch told them.

Councilmembers did tell the applicants they will be paying attention to make sure the project has enough on-site parking so not to create problems around the neighborhood and on the impact the new retail uses and homes would have on Poway Road traffic.

Several residents spoke during the workshop, all in support of the Trading Post concept.

Diane Foote, a member of a city panel that has been working on changes to the Poway Road Specific Plan, noted the development adds badly needed housing choices, including entry-level home ownership with the townhomes and market-rate apartment rentals. She noted there is a pressing need, in a city where 28 percent of the population is over 55 years in age, for places where homeowners can downsize and still live in the city.

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