

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

TO: ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMISSION

FROM: Steve Banks, Associate Planner

SUBJECT: **MIRABELLA CONDOMINIUMS AT EMPIRE RANCH, GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT, SPECIFIC PLAN AMENDMENT, TENTATIVE SUBDIVISION MAP AND PLANNED DEVELOPMENT PERMIT**

BACKGROUND

On December 1, 1992, the City Council certified the Environmental Impact Report and approved the General Plan Amendment, Rezone, Specific Plan and Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map for the Russell Ranch project (now known as Empire Ranch). The 1,739.2-acre project consisted of: 3,105 single-family, low-density units; 739 single-family, high-density units; 344 multifamily units; a public golf course and private golf course; a regional commercial and neighborhood commercial site; parkland; and natural and improved open space. On December 23, 1993, the City Council approved the Russell Ranch Development Agreement and on May 24, 1994, the City Council approved the East Area Facilities Financing Plan, which included the Empire Ranch development.

In 2000, the City Council approved a Specific Plan Amendment to amend the Empire Ranch Specific Plan to: establish separate development standards for each Subarea in the Plan Area, modify rear yard landscaping requirements for padded lots in the Plan Area, replace the private golf course in the Central Subarea with single-family residential land use and a five-mile looped trail system, and replace the 21-foot height limit for structures in the West, Central, East and South Sub areas, with Hillside Architectural Design Standards.

APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL

The applicant, Elliott Homes, is requesting approval of a General Plan Amendment, Specific Plan Amendment, Tentative Subdivision Map and Planned Development Permit to develop a 154-unit condominium project to be known as Mirabella at Empire Ranch. The proposed project, which is part of the Empire Ranch Specific Plan, is located on an 11.47-acre site located at the southwest corner of East Natoma Street and Golf Links Drive. The project is zoned SP92-3 and designated C-1 PD (Neighborhood Business, Planned Development District) within the Empire Ranch Specific Plan, and the General Plan land-use designation for the site is NC (Neighborhood Commercial). The applicant is proposing to change the General Plan land use designation to MMD (Multifamily Medium Density) and to change the specific plan designation to R-M PD (Residential Multifamily Dwelling District) within the Empire Ranch Specific Plan.

The proposed project includes 154 condominium units which are located in 29 individual buildings throughout the site. The project also includes an open space area with amenities that include but are not limited to a tot lot, a bocce court, and a barbeque picnic area with shade structure. The 29, two/three-story condominium buildings, have been designed with five building types that include three and four bedroom units. The three and four bedroom units will range in size from 1,328 to 1,899 square-feet and include an attached two-car garage. The condominium units will be constructed with a stucco and stone veneer exterior and utilize earth-tone paint colors. A detailed description of the proposed buildings is provided in the table below:

Building Type	Floor Plans	Bed/Bath	Unit Size	Total Units	Building Height	Front Setback	Rear Setback	Side Setbacks
A (3-Plex)	4	3/4BR, 2.5/3 BA	1,328-1,899 SF	12	34'10"	30', 24'	15'	15', 30'
B (4-Plex)	4	3/4BR, 2.5/3 BA	1,328-1,899 SF	8	34'10"	30', 24'	15'	15', 30'
C (5-Plex)	4	3/4BR, 2.5/3 BA	1,328-1,899 SF	45	34'10"	30', 24'	15'	15', 30'
D (6-Plex)	4	3/4BR, 2.5/3 BA	1,328-1,899 SF	54	26', 34'10"	30', 24'	15'	15', 30'
E (7-Plex)	4	3/4BR, 2.5/3 BA	1,328-1,899 SF	35	26', 34'10"	30', 24'	15'	15', 30'
Summary	4			154				

Two vehicular entrances are proposed into the project site, one from East Natoma Street and the other from Golf Links Drive. Internal vehicular circulation consists of a private street that will loop through the project site with two-way traffic and private alleys that provide access to the condominium units. The project includes a mixture of garage parking spaces (308 garage parking spaces) and open parking stalls (73 open stall parking spaces) totaling 381 parking spaces. Additional site improvements include sidewalks, pedestrian walkways, underground utilities, site landscaping, and an off-site pedestrian bridge.

SITE DESIGN

Elliott Homes proposes to develop a community of 154 condominium units that will be known as “Mirabella at Empire Ranch.” The proposed specific plan land use designation is R-M PD (Residential, Multifamily Dwelling District) within the Empire Ranch Specific Plan, and the proposed General Plan land use designation for the project site is MMD (Multifamily Medium Density).

While the R-M zoning district allows for a density of 12-17.9 units per acre, the applicant’s proposal is for development at a density of 16.1-units per acre. The R-M zoning designation is intended to provide a range of reduced lot sizes including condominiums, townhouses, apartments, and other small-lot housing types. The applicant is proposing a condominium project that includes 29 individual condominium buildings and a common recreational area. The common recreational area will include a tot lot, a bocce court, and a barbecue picnic area with a shade structure.

In reviewing the proposed project, staff has determined that the project provides acceptable internal circulation for both pedestrians and vehicles. The Folsom Municipal Code requires 1.5 parking spaces per each unit (irrespective of the bedroom count). In addition, one guest parking space must be provided for every five units. The applicant has proposed to provide 308 garage parking spaces (two spaces per unit) and 73 uncovered guest parking spaces (381 total parking spaces and a 2.47 space-per-unit ratio). In addition, the applicant has proposed to provide 43 bicycle parking spaces. Staff has determined that the proposed project parking meets the parking requirements as stated in the Folsom Municipal Code, Section 17.57.

Two access driveways will provide access to the project site with one driveway on East Natoma Street and one driveway on Golf Links Drive. The access driveway on East Natoma Street will permit right turns-in and right turns-out only while the access driveway on Golf Links Drive will permit right and left turns-in and right turns-in and right-turns out. Staff recommends brick pavers or another type of colored masonry material be used to designate pedestrian crosswalks on the project site, in addition to where pedestrian paths cross drive aisles, and incorporated as a design feature at the driveway entrances on East Natoma Street and Golf Links Drive. Condition No. 3 has been included to reflect this requirement. Pedestrian circulation will be facilitated by interior walkways that connect all of the individual buildings and the common area. In addition, a pedestrian walkway will be placed around the entire perimeter of the project site.

Walls and Fences

The applicant proposes to construct six-foot-tall, open-view, wrought-iron fencing on the rear of the project site and on a small section on the southern end of the site. In addition, the applicant proposes to construct a ten-foot-tall masonry wall between the northern boundary of the project site and the SMUD property. Staff recommends the masonry wall match the colors and materials of the standard Empire Ranch wall design. Condition No. 5 has been included to reflect this requirement.

Site Lighting

The applicant proposes to use a mixture of building-attached lighting, pole-mounted lighting, and landscape lighting. Staff recommends that the proposed lighting meet the standards established in the City of Folsom Standard Construction Specifications, including primary light sources being shielding and directed downward and exterior lighting be designed to minimize glare on adjacent properties. Condition No. 6 is included to reflect these requirements. In addition, staff has concluded that the design of the building-attached lighting should be consistent with the design theme of the condominiums. Condition No. 8 has been included to reflect this requirement.

ARCHITECTURE

Mirabella draws on classic design and style that encourages resident interaction while also preserving each unit's privacy and individuality. The elevations are best described as a unique interpretation of Italianate-style architecture. The design incorporates stucco finishes, stone veneer, wood decks, wood posts and railing, wood shutters, and steel flower rings. Additional design features include Juliet balconies, "S" tile roofs, a variety of window trims, and tile details. Each of the four floor plans will have direct access garages designed in a distinct character with unique details that allow for different living spaces.

The 154 units are blended in five building types created in response to their location on the site and range from 3 to 7 units per building. 29 buildings are inter-connected by pedestrian oriented landscape paseos with front porches focused on the street and the open space. All sides of the building elevations are designed in keeping with the Italianate architectural style. The design, location of front doors, use of courtyards, and unique details at each unit provides a sense of individuality for each unit. With front porches, courtyards, and decks off the front elevation of each unit, residents may interact with one another as they move along outdoor pedestrian paseos.

Primary building materials for the proposed buildings include a stucco exterior, stucco trim, stone veneer, vinyl windows, wrought-iron railing, paneled metal roll-up garage doors, wood railings, wood posts, wood shutters, metal flower pot holders and concrete roof tiles. There are three overall color schemes that will utilize a variety of earth-tone colors including brown, beige, and tan. The proposed concrete roof tiles will also come in three earth-tone colors ranging from reddish-brown to light grey.

The overall design for Mirabella at Empire Ranch is compatible with the nearby residential developments with respect to scale, design, compatibility, building articulation, colors, and materials. The proposed condominium units provide a high degree of articulation through the use of varied roof types, building offsets, roof overhangs, and varied building heights. In addition, the proposed building materials (stucco, stone veneer) and colors (earthtone) are similar in nature to the nearby single-family residences.

In evaluating the scale of the proposed project in relation to the nearby single-family residential areas, staff considered various factors including buffers, building mass, building height, and landscaping. The proposed condominium project is located 124 feet (154 feet structure-to-structure) from the nearest single-family residences to the south (Parkway). The Natomas Ditch, which is located between the proposed project and the single-family residences, includes a number of mature oak trees that provide a natural visual barrier between the existing residences and the proposed project. In addition to the existing oak trees, the applicant is proposing to landscape the rear of the project site to lessen the visual impact of the project.

The nearby single-family residences on Smith Way consist of one (6 homes) and two-story (21 homes) residences that are approximately 18 and 30 feet in height respectively, whereas the proposed condominium units are 26 and 34 feet in height. There is also a grade difference of approximately eight feet between the single-family residences and the proposed condominiums. The height differential between the single-family residences and the proposed project is acceptable when taking into account the 124-foot buffer area between the two land uses and the existing and proposed landscaping. Staff has determined that there is sufficient scale transition between the single-family residences and the proposed condominium project. In addition, staff has determined that the design of the proposed buildings is consistent with the Empire Ranch Specific Plan and Design Guidelines.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN AND EXISTING TREES

The project site has been rough-graded and no trees are located on the site. An existing thirty-foot-wide and twenty-four-foot-wide landscape corridor abuts the project site along the frontages

of East Natoma Street and Golf Links Drive respectively. The proposed tree, plants, and shrubs for the landscape plan were selected with the objective of providing a manicured appearance while allowing minimal maintenance and low water consumption. Proposed landscape improvements include drought-tolerant plant materials including trees, shrubs, and groundcover. The proposed shade and accent trees are Western Rosebud, Crape Myrtle, Australian Willow, Italian Pine, Red Oak, Valley Oak, and Coastal Redwood. Shrub and ground cover materials will be in a variety of colors and textures. The shrubs and groundcover will consist of Daylilies, Spanish Lavender, Sunset Rockrose, Dwarf Periwinkle, Rosemary, and Dwarf Fescue Turf grass. Staff has determined that the proposed landscaping is consistent with the Empire Ranch Specific Plan plant list.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Staff will prepare an Initial Study to identify any impacts resulting from the proposed project. The Planning Commission will review the Initial Study and the applicable environmental documentation in conjunction with the requested entitlements for this project.

CONCLUSION

Staff supports the design, colors, and material for the proposed project. Staff has determined that the applicant's proposal will be compatible with the surrounding residential areas. Staff recommends approval of PN05-188 based on the proposed Site Plan, Building Elevations, and Landscape Plan presented at the August 25, 2005 Architectural Review Commission meeting, as modified herein:

CONDITIONS

1. This approval is for five condominium master plans (29 total buildings) for Mirabella at Empire Ranch. The applicant shall submit building plans that comply with this approval and the attached plans dated April 29, 2005.
2. All mechanical equipment shall be ground-mounted and concealed from view of public streets, neighboring properties and nearby higher buildings.
3. Brick pavers or another type of colored masonry material shall be used to designate pedestrian crosswalks on the project site, in addition to where pedestrian paths cross drive aisles, and shall be incorporated as a design feature at the driveway entrances.
4. Final landscape plans shall be subject to final review and approval by City staff.
5. The masonry wall along the northern property boundary shall match the colors and materials of the standard Empire Ranch wall design.
6. Primary light sources shall be shielded and directed downward and exterior lighting be designed to minimize glare on adjacent properties.
7. Building-attached lighting shall be compatible with the design theme of the condominium buildings.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity Map
2. Site Plan, dated April 29, 2005
3. Building Elevations, dated April 29, 2005
4. Site Cross Section
5. Floor plans, dated April 29, 2005
6. Preliminary Landscape Plan, dated April 29, 2005
7. Site Photographs