

Advisory panel urges rejection of Ponte Vista housing project

By Rachel Jones
Staff Writer

The Ponte Vista Community Advisory Committee has unanimously approved a final report recommending against a proposed multi-family housing development and in favor of keeping the site zoned for low-density single-family homes.

The report also contains a minority opinion from five members of the 13-member committee, who argued in favor of a "mixed-use, multi-family development."

About 40 people gathered at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on Monday night to hear the report, which came after a year of meetings with developer Bob Bisno, Los Angeles city officials and community leaders.

The report is not the end of the fight over the development that has been proposed at the old Navy housing site on Western Avenue. The city Planning Department will take up the issue next, with the ultimate decision made by the City Council.

Bisno's original plan called for 2,300 multi-family units on about 62 acres. In June, Bisno scaled back the plan to 1,950 multi-family units.

The committee's report stated that this density is "considerably higher in total housing units than what we believe can be reasonably integrated."

An alternate opinion in the report, signed by committee members Creasie Adams, Jack Baric, Al DiRocco, Sal Sotomayor and Arlene Zimmerall recommended that the project be "a mixed-use, multi-family development," including a majority of senior units.

It stated that keeping the site zoned for single-family residential will cause the community to miss out on the proposal's positive aspects, including "high quality, reasonably priced housing," as well as public amenities, recreational facilities and economic benefits.

The alternate opinion also cited the advisory panel's inability to find "middle ground" between Bisno's proposed 1,950 multi-family units and the R-1 allowed 525 single-family homes. They recommended that the project's density be determined after deliberations with Los Angeles City Councilwoman Janice Hahn, the city Planning Department and Bisno Development.

Bisno said in a statement Tuesday that he would continue to work with Hahn and the community on the project.

"It's up to us to make the case for Ponte Vista," he said, "and we will spend the next year in the community to do just that."

The committee expressed some frustrations in the report, specifically in dealing with Los Angeles city officials. Under a heading called "lessons learned from the Ponte Vista CAC process," the committee called out the transportation and planning departments for their "lack of leadership and in some cases unwillingness to offer much needed information."

Committee members expressed hope at the meeting that the report would be widely distributed so that other neighborhood councils and committees could learn from the problems they encountered.

According to Planning Department representatives who were at Monday's meeting, Bisno's zoning-change application will be processed and the department will make a recommendation based on environmental impact reports, community plans and other information. Public hearings will then be held, followed by a vote by the city planning committee. The City Council will then take up the issue, which could be in as little as six months.

rachel.jones@dailybreeze.com