

# **Bisno: Ponte Vista limits would cut amenities on San Pedro project**

By Donna Littlejohn Staff Writer  
Posted: 11/24/2008 11:20:53 PM PST

Developer Bob Bisno said Monday he's pressing ahead with his 1,950-home Ponte Vista housing development proposal, despite a staff recommendation that calls for the project to be significantly downsized.

In a written statement, Bisno said the department's high-end number of about 1,100 homes for the San Pedro project would not provide enough money "to build the parks, ball fields, open space and traffic mitigation we have proposed for the Harbor Area community.

"(The number also) would not allow a road to Mary Star of the Sea High School."

The amenities have been promised by the developer in exchange for the project.

"This is only a staff recommendation and we plan to make our case to the citywide Planning Commission on Thursday, Dec. 11," Bisno said.

Bisno, however, also indicated he was willing to negotiate.

"I have stated repeatedly that 1,950 was not a magic number. I am willing to work with the community on a plan that makes sense for all of us. Now is the time to go back to the table."

Jerry Gaines, a member of the citizens advisory panel that studied Ponte Vista, said any number higher than the 1,100 suggested in the report would be "unacceptable" to him, based on the concerns about density, traffic and neighborhood character enumerated in the report.

John Dugan, deputy director of the Los Angeles Planning Department, said commissioners don't often go against staff recommendations.

But Dugan noted there were "a whole range of options" before the Los Angeles City Council - the final authority on the matter - regarding the proposed density on the 61.5-acre property on Western Avenue.

"They could come back with another density, say 1,500, or they could agree with staff," Dugan said.

Released late Friday, the 37-page recommendation denied the Ponte Vista proposal, saying it was inconsistent with the General Plan.

The report also suggested that the proposed number of homes for older residents - 44 percent of Bisno's homes would be set aside for buyers 55 and older - is too many considering a lack of access to public transit.

"I think it's a fair and balanced assessment of all the issues," Dugan said of the report.

The primary problem, Dugan said, was one of density and the scale of the development.

"This location also doesn't have very good access," he said, noting the only way in or out would be along Western Avenue.

"We didn't think it met any of the criteria," Dugan said.

Bisno said the recommendation wasn't all bad news for Ponte Vista.

"The report recommends a multifamily development and does not support single-family homes, which we have always stated made no sense for the Ponte Vista site," he said in his written statement.

"The report endorses a mixed-income community, which we strongly believe is desperately needed for our working families, first-time buyers and young families.

"However, 310 homes for low-income families as suggested in the report is a heavy burden for a community of approximately 1,200 homes to support."

The recommendation, Bisno said, "basically creates two communities, one of expensive and high-end town homes and one that is low-income to very low-income housing. This is not smart planning."

As for the lack of transit for seniors, Bisno said the development has been working with the MTA to increase bus service to the site.

He also said he and his partners "have recently committed multiple millions in additional funding to continue our efforts."

Before the matter goes before the citywide Planning Commission, Dugan said, it will be heard at a local planning commission meeting "for review and comment only" at 4:30 p.m. Dec. 2 at the Boys and girls Club in San Pedro.

Bisno first rolled out his Ponte Vista proposal to the public in October 2005.

Since that time, it has attracted intense debate in the port community, with many opponents arguing the former Navy property should remain zoned only for single-family homes as opposed to multifamily town houses.

[donna.littlejohn@dailybreeze.com](mailto:donna.littlejohn@dailybreeze.com)