

**PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, RICHMOND CITY HALL**

Council Chambers  
August 21, 2025  
6:30 P.M.

**BOARD MEMBERS**

Bruce Brubaker  
Rachel Lockett  
Jonathan Harrison

Alexander Golovets  
Gay Timmons

The regular meeting was called to order by Chair Jonathan Harrison at 6:31 P.M.

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Chair Jonathan Harrison, Vice Chair Bruce Brubaker, Secretary Gay Timmons, and Commissioner Alexander Golovets

**Absent:** Commissioner Rachel Lockett

**INTRODUCTIONS**

**Staff Present:** Planning Staff: Planning Manager Avery Stark; Senior Planner Michele Morris; Assistant Planner Pete Srivarom; and Senior Assistant City Attorney James Atencio

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** July 17, 2025

**ACTION:** It was M/S/C (Brubaker/Timmons) to approve the minutes from the July 17, 2025 meeting, as submitted, which carried by the following vote: 4-0 (Ayes: Brubaker, Golovets, Timmons and Harrison; Noes: None; Abstain: None; Absent: Lockett).

**BROWN ACT – PUBLIC FORUM**

CORDELL HINDLER, Richmond, thanked the Commission for denying the office space on the south side of Richmond. He also emphasized that every time a proposed was submitted to the Planning Commission, the applicant must first submit the application to the applicable neighborhood council.

**AGENDA**

There were no changes to the agenda.

**CONSENT CALENDAR:**

There was no Consent Calendar.

**NEW ITEM**

## 1. **PLN25-087: Chevron Food Mart Beer and Wine Sales**

PUBLIC HEARING to consider a Conditional Use Permit to allow beer and wine retail sales at a Chevron gas station food mart at 2900 Hilltop Mall Road (APN: 405-302-010).  
CM-5, Commercial Mixed Use, Activity Center District.  
Jaswinder Singh, Owner; Ron Cole, Applicant  
Planner: Pete Srivarom

Tentative Recommendation: Conditional Approval

Planner Pete Srivarom presented the staff report dated August 21, 2025, for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to add a Type-20 Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Off-Sale Beer and Wine license to authorize the sale of beer and wine for consumption off the premises where sold at an existing Chevron gasoline station and convenience market, a 1.5-acre parcel in the Hilltop area. The surrounding uses consisted of the Hilltop Mall to the north, residences to the west, a religious assembly use to the east and small-scale retail and a fire station to the south. The proposed hours would be Monday to Sunday 8:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M., with alcohol sales Monday to Sunday from 10:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M.

Mr. Srivarom reported that the only exterior improvement associated with the application would be one bicycle rack to accommodate five bicycles, to be placed in front of the market. Cashiers would be trained to not sell alcohol before 10:00 A.M. and would also be trained by the ABC for age verification at checkout and verification of loitering to prevent on-site consumption. An electronic ID verification machine would be installed at the register, signage related to hours of alcohol sales would be posted, and interior and exterior cameras would have a two-week retrieval function.

Mr. Srivarom explained that the zoning requirements in the Richmond Municipal Code (RMC) required that any off-sale retail of alcohol would have to be 600 feet away from other liquor stores, convenience markets, schools, recreational centers and public parks. He reported that there were no liquor stores, convenience markets, schools, recreational centers or public parks within 600 feet of the proposal.

Mr. Srivarom explained how the hours of operation had been proposed to align with the alcohol sales and that the standard hours of alcohol sales were from 8:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. daily; the applicant proposed to extend alcohol sales to 10:00 P.M. subject to the Planning Commission's approval. The project was consistent with the General Plan and he explained why, and he identified the expected benefits of the proposal to support residents' daily needs requiring small-scale local retail within walking distance of homes, to enhance the commodities provided by a convenience store, to encourage local residents to spend tax dollars in the City, and the bicycle rack would encourage a variety of travel modes.

Mr. Srivarom identified a comment letter from the Hilltop Neighborhood Council included in the Commission packet, which expressed concern with the close proximity of schools and residences, although he reiterated that the proposal met the minimum RMC requirements. He stated letters had been sent out to all property owners within 300 feet of the project site and no responses had been received. The Richmond Police Department (RPD) had been contacted and it had no safety concern and supported the proposed hours of operation. He added that the proposed CUP complied with all required findings related to the CUP and those related to alcohol sales.

Mr. Srivarom recommended that the proposed resolution to approve PLN25-087, Chevron Food Mart Beer and Wine Sales, be approved, subject to City Council appeal.

Chair Harrison OPENED the PUBLIC HEARING.

RON COLE, the agent for the property owner, was available online.

CORDELL HINDLER, Richmond, supported the Chevron market but expressed concern with the close proximity to schools and the potential traffic impact that could result with the sale of beer and wine.

BHAVIN KHATRI, President of the Hilltop District Neighborhood Council, stated that the Hilltop District Neighborhood Council had voted to oppose the proposal given the close proximity to two schools, although he acknowledged staff's statement that the schools were greater than 600 feet away from the use and a dispensary. The Council did not support the proposal for that reason.

JACOB SCHROTH, a Hilltop resident, also opposed the proposed CUP, agreed with the comments and noted the efforts of local residents to create a community that was positive and brought people together in positive ways. He noted there were few amenities in the area and he did not see the sale of alcohol as a priority need in the area. He sought restaurants and more businesses and commented that while the area did not have high crime now, that could change with the sale of alcohol. He added that there were sideshows in the area and he did not want to add the easy accessibility of alcohol to that type of activity.

ARTO RINTEELA, the Chair of the Richmond Neighborhood Coordinating Council (RNCC), which oversaw the 31 neighborhood councils in the City of Richmond, and the President of the Fairmede-Hilltop Neighborhood Council, supported the adjacent Hilltop Neighborhood Council given that there were not enough police to allow a use selling alcohol.

COIRE REILLY, a Hilltop resident who worked for the West Contra Costa Transportation Commission and 511 Contra Costa, and who ran the West County Bike Rack Program that provided bike racks all along West County, explained that he was not addressing the proposed sale of alcohol but wanted to address the style of bike rack (wave style) that had been shown in the presentation. He recommended an omega shape or U-shape bike rack that offered two points of contact and more security.

LINDA O'NEIL (online), a Hilltop resident, stated there had never been a place for the purchase of alcohol in the area and she objected to the sale of alcohol in the area given the proximity of schools. She opposed the proposal.

APRIL ROY (online), a Hilltop Village resident, noted that littering at the Walmart was an issue and she suggested that loitering would become a bigger issue if alcohol sales were allowed. As a member of the Hilltop Village Safety Committee and Communication Committee, and on behalf of Hilltop Village residents, she was very concerned for the sale of alcohol and opposed the application.

Chair Harrison allowed time for the applicant's rebuttal.

RON COLE (online) acknowledged the comments but questioned why the speakers had not reached out to the applicant with their concerns. He reported that he had reached out by phone and email to Bhavin Khatri before the application had been filed but had gotten no response. He was therefore confused as to why there was opposition to the proposal and commented that opposition could likely have been resolved prior to this point. He emphasized that the proposal was not for a liquor store; there would be limited beer and wine, limited hours, the area was a nice area, and he did not understand the issues.

Chair Harrison CLOSED the PUBLIC HEARING.

At the request of the Commission, Mr. Srivarom pointed out the nearest school and park to the proposed site that would fall under the distance requirement in the RMC given that the school was 900 feet distant, exceeding the 600-foot requirement. He explained there would be no physical change to the structure of the building in that there would be one display gondola for unchilled beer and wine, and the placement of chilled beer and wine only in four existing refrigerators. The only exterior improvement would be to add the bicycle rack. Other than that, there were no other improvements.

Mr. Srivarom also explained that the schools involved were a Summit Public School, Aspire Richmond College Preparatory, K-12 and an elementary school closer to. He also verified that the proposed staff-recommended conditions had been required by the code and had been accepted by the applicant. He verified that the store currently would be open 8:00 A.M. to Midnight but had proposed the reduction of those hours from 8:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. when alcohol sales would terminate for the day. He explained that change in hours of operation had been suggested by the RPD to better align with other nearby stores selling alcohol until closure at 10:00 P.M. He also clarified that Walmart did not sell alcohol, stores that sold alcohol were spread out in the census tract, and another gas station/convenience store closer to Richmond Parkway sold alcohol. The RPD had indicated no concern with the sale of alcohol at the subject location.

Chair Harrison suggested that the change in hours would likely benefit the residential neighborhoods.

Chair Harrison REOPENED the PUBLIC HEARING.

CAPTAIN JOHN LOPEZ of the RPD stated with respect to the Arco gas station/convenience market at Richmond Parkway and Atlas, that he had no stats to back up his comments but from time to time there had been issues regarding loitering and the homeless at that particular station. He added that side shows were frequent in Richmond in general, random from the south side to central and to the northern district, and were hard to predict. Side shows were typically around the freeways and there had been side shows at Hilltop.

Chair Harrison CLOSED the REOPENED PUBLIC HEARING, and then REOPENED it again to hear from the applicant as to whether or not he could benefit from the opportunity to discuss with the Hilltop District Neighborhood Council the concerns that had been expressed by the public speakers.

RON COLE (online) did not know that the public speakers understood the ABC license involved. He stated it was not a liquor store or a big convenience store, but a store where minimum sales would be available to the customers who had asked for it. He had reached out as earlier reported but with no response. He suggested that if the speakers knew what was going on they might not object to the application.

Chair Harrison RECLOSED the PUBLIC HEARING.

Chair Harrison stated he was inclined to approve the application without a continuance. He made a MOTION to adopt Resolution No. 25-03, approving a Conditional Use Permit (PLN25-087) for a Type-20 ABC Off-Sale Beer and Wine license for the Chevron Mart, subject to the conditions contained in the staff report dated August 21, 2025. There was no second to the motion and the motion died for lack of a second.

On the discussion, Vice Chair Brubaker noted the dilemma in that there was a group of nearby residents who objected to the application, an applicant who had tried and maybe not hard enough to get in contact with the neighborhood, and an analysis by staff who had reported that all the findings had been met to approve the project. He questioned whether a condition might be added to the recommended conditions of approval to allow the approval of the project and still respond to the community's concerns.

Commissioner Timmons noted her understanding that the primary concerns expressed were when parents picked up their kids from school, and she asked if there could be a compromise to shut down the sale of alcohol for the hour, hour and a half when that was occurring.

Mr. Srivarom stated the hours of operation could be adjusted, such as selling from 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. and 5:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M., although Commissioners noted that might be difficult to enforce. Another option suggested was that if the project was approved that the applicant return to the Commission after a year to see if the concerns had manifested.

**ACTION: It was M/S/C (Brubaker/Golovets) to continue PLN25-087, Chevron Mart Beer and Wine Sales to the Planning Commission meeting of September 18, 2025 or to the next scheduled meeting thereafter, to allow the applicant to meet with the Hilltop District Neighborhood Council to discuss the application, with a report back to the Planning Commission, carried by the following vote: 4-0 (Ayes: Brubaker, Golovets, Timmons, Harrison; Noes: None; Abstain: None; Absent: Lockett).**

Chair Harrison declared a five-minute recess at this time.

## **STUDY SESSION**

### **2. PLN23-344: Hilltop Horizon Specific Plan**

STUDY SESSION to present and receive Planning Commission comments on the draft Land Plan Concept developed for the Hilltop Horizon Specific Plan. (APNs: 405-290-068-7; 405-290-069-5; 405-290-070-3; 405-290-071-1; 405-302-010-5; 405-302-014-7; 405-302-016-2; 405-302-017-0; 405-302-018-8; 405-302-019-6; 405-303-003-9; 405-303-011-2; 405-303-012-0; 405-303-013-8; 405-303-015-3; 405-304-002-0; 405-320-001-2; 405-320-004-6; 405-320-005-3; 405-320-006-1; 405-320-007-9; 405-320-008-7; 405-320-009-5; 405-320-010-3; 405-320-011-1; 405-320-012-9; 405-320-013-7; 405-320-015-2; 405-320-016-0; 405-320-017-8. CM-5, Commercial Mixed Use, Activity Center; CR, Regional Commercial District.

City of Richmond, Applicant

Planner: Michele Morris

Tentative Recommendation: Conditional Approval

Senior Planner Michele Morris speaking to the Hilltop Horizon Specific Plan, presented the Draft Land Plan Concept for the study session that set the framework for the discussion of the 143 acres encompassing the mall area and peripheral land to the south and east. She stated the City of Richmond was leading the team of consultants including ESA, SITELAB Urban Studio and other policy and environmental planners, traffic consultants, engineers and economists. She presented the mission statement and vision for the Land Plan Concept to solicit the Commission's comments and input during the study session. *The mission statement: To reestablish Hilltop Horizon as an active and productive destination that supports a high quality of living, diverse experiences, and a new era of economic property.* She also read the vision statement intended to implement the mission.

Ms. Morris explained that the Hilltop Plan Area had been discussed within the General Plan as having key roles in economic development, land use policies and land use goals for Richmond, and the work of creating a specific plan for Hilltop Horizon was aimed to fulfill the General Plan's intention. She stated that Hilltop remained a major activity center. She advised that the creation of the specific plan was funded by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC's) Priority Development Area (PDA) Grant and the State's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) Local Early Action Planning Grant to reenvision zoning and promote mixed use development and housing. She explained that the Legislature had enacted housing legislation to encourage housing creation, remove obstacles for more housing throughout the state, streamline the housing approval process and limit jurisdictions' ability to reduce maximum housing densities, along with allowing, by right, residential development on commercial sites including mall sites like Hilltop.

Ms. Morris reported the Hilltop Horizon project had begun in 2021, and since then the City had conducted analyses and discussion at the existing conditions at Hilltop and concept alternatives, which had been presented to the advisory committee, the community, the Planning Commission and the City Council. The City Council had directed staff to do more scenario planning for the site and since then City staff had been interacting with the mall property owner and its ideas for developing the property. The Land Plan Concept for Hilltop Horizon had been developed and would be presented at this time. The Land Plan would be finalized, technical analyses would be conducted, and a specific plan and environmental document would be drafted.

Ms. Morris identified the reports and studies that would be developed as part of that process and recommended that the Planning Commission receive the presentation on the draft Land Plan Concept to be used as the basis for the draft Hilltop Horizon Specific Plan and environmental analysis and provide feedback on the Study Session questions to the City Council.

Those questions were identified as:

Question 1: *Do you support stepping down residential density at the west and east plan area edges to create a mid-density residential buffer (townhomes, multiplexes, stacked flats) adjacent to existing homes?*

Question 2: *Do you support establishing a compact, urban Gateway District near Klose Way and Garrity Way – an area with strong I-80 access – that allows a mix of higher-density housing and active, people-oriented uses such as shops, dining, and public gathering spaces?*

Question 3: *Do you support creating transitional districts between the medium-density residential areas and the higher-intensity Gateway District that allow a flexible mix of housing, retail, offices, medical uses, and other potential economic drivers?*

Question 4: *Beyond the proposed elements – such as continuous bike and pedestrian pathways, a centralized open space area, an improved transit hub, and enhanced access to Hilltop Lake Park – what other features would you like to see included to further enhance connectivity, health, and recreational opportunities?*

WOODY HANSON, SITELAB Urban Studio, presented the Land Plan Concept, and stated the process had started by looking at the existing General Plan and Zoning to understand how to improve the land use relationships and development intensities to be more supportive of project goals and deliver near-term development considering market conditions. He pointed out the existing zoning of the site and explained how that zoning would be used to help guide the proposed zoning and densities in the Land Plan Concept.

Mr. Hanson identified the first primary move for the Land Use Plan to rearrange the current area of low density on the east side of the site to split into two zones to buffer existing lower density residential to the center of the site to hold overall density, guided by the General Plan and the recently passed state bills, and to become more contact sensitive as to where low density was located. He stated a more incremental transition of densities had then been implemented between the east and west edges into a mixed used gateway zone along Blume Drive to ensure the center of activity would be located along primary roads and in proximity to the freeway to enhance access and create transition from existing residential communities.

Mr. Hanson identified four zones that supported a wide range of building types and density as the mid-density zone, transitional density zone, high-density/intensity zone, and the gateway zone. He showed examples of the residential and commercial development opportunities that could occupy each of the zones, and stated the plan was to take advantage of the distant views gained from being in the Hilltop Mall Area, while also connecting to Hilltop Lake Park and providing new opportunities with paseos or greenways to connect through the site and the urban plazas and gathering spaces within the high intensity and gateway zones.

BEVERLY CHOI, Northern California Community Planning Program Manager, Environmental Science Associates (ESA) online, reiterated the General Plan's vision for the Hilltop Area, a major activity center. She stated there were only a small handful of those designations within Richmond with Hilltop, Marina Bay and the Downtown, high value locations that did not come up often and how they were planned now would determine their long-term success over time.

Ms. Choi presented images of Richmond's interpretation of the mall land owner's most recent concept that had been shared with the City and over time in response to feedback on that plan, there was now a more mixed-use concept and densities may be reduced compared to what the General Plan had envisioned for Hilltop.

Ms. Choi presented a summary of the three concepts to compare the existing zoning, the City Land Plan Concept and the Mall Site Landowner Concept. She noted the intent of the City plan was to translate the General Plan vision into an implementable framework to provide gradual transitions where the edges would allow lower density mid-scale housing to match the existing neighborhoods, and moving inward to step up to higher rise housing and intensities that could support shops, employment opportunities and retail, which would also help the City meet its housing goals. The City's land plan would also provide predictability by zone, and for developers would provide a clear framework to work within. She detailed the benefits and amenities that would be provided with the City concept that would provide more options to the community. She explained that the City concept was about balance, about creating the flexibility within the zones where they made sense and provide predictability about open spaces, connectivity, diverse housing, quality jobs, safety, and clear entitlements for landowners and businesses along with flexibility to respond to market conditions and certainty.

As to next steps, Ms. Choi stated the City Land Plan Concept would be submitted to the City Council in September along with any input provided by the Planning Commission to obtain Council direction on the preferred plan, and with that direction to then conduct a technical analysis that would feed into the specific plan and environmental document in 2026, with the goal to adopt the specific plan and the environmental document in 2026.

Ms. Choi referred to the four questions and the request for feedback on those four questions that she reiterated at this time.

Commissioner Timmons asked about the population impact.

Ms. Morris explained that would depend on the kind of development that would actually happen over time in that the zoning across the full plan area would be reframed to encourage and promote development; housing, commercial, or both. As to when the area might be developed, she stated the City was at the beginning of creating a specific plan and while she could not predict the future, this would be a way to figure out how the community envisioned development to occur and a way of starting to figure out how a community wanted a major activity center to be developed.

Chair Harrison asked if the City was planning to accommodate the additional schools or other facilities that might be needed as a result of the specific plan and how that would be addressed.

Planning Manager Stark clarified that the City did not build or operate schools. On an annual basis, he met with the demographer of the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) and the demographer of the state and looked at all potential residential development that was going to occur to understand the impacts it would have on student population and whether or not the WCCUSD would endeavor to build a new school. There were also existing private and charter schools in those neighborhoods that may see the need to expand in the future. The land itself would allow for a school if a private developer, charter school, public agency or other needed to produce a school. The demographers would determine whether a new school was warranted.

Chair Harrison asked whether as the plan evolved some kind of language would be included in the plan to ensure the community that all the needs, and potentially a school, would be accommodated.

Mr. Stark explained that when getting into the development of the plan and the language around specific goals, policies and standards, there would be a section on education, policies that would be supported, and zoning that would be supported by policies or other considerations in the document that would guide the development of a school.

Commissioner Timmons emphasized that along with schools, infrastructure as a whole would have to grow as a result of a burgeoning project.

Mr. Stark stated that would be part of Phase 2. It was too early to precisely pinpoint those locations but the services that supported a healthy growing economy and community would entail those services. The framework would be in place so that those developing in Richmond would know of the needs related to the population growth.

Ms. Choi added with respect to schools that as part of the specific plan the process would include an analysis of understanding what the development potential would look like and the impacts to the population based on residential units. She stated they had conducted a full student generation calculation to determine what impacts there would be to surrounding schools and if that would trigger the need for a new facility. The team would conduct those additional analyses in the next phase of work that would include police, fire and infrastructure. A variety of technical analyses would determine the impacts associated with the project.

Commissioner Golovets asked about the phases of the project and whether they would target the self-sustainability of the project, such as a hospital or a school, and whether the construction of the residential would be aligned with any needed facility and how that would affect the surrounding community. He wanted to know if that would help or burden the existing community.

Chair Harrison OPENED the PUBLIC COMMENTS.

COIRE REILLY, a Hilltop resident, spoke in support of the project from a number of angles. He reiterated that he worked at WCCTAC, which was on the Technical Advisory Committee for the project, on the Richmond Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and had been involved in the General Plan Update when the project had been envisioned years ago. He was pleased to see the project come to fruition. With respect to WCCTAC, he explained the agency heard the concerns about the project, the density and the traffic impacts. WCCTAC had been a partner on the project and would continue to partner through the implementation of the project, along with transit partners BART and WestCat, and he would like to be involved in the further development of the plan. He was also interested in developing a Transportation Management Agency (TMA) for the project. He characterized this specific plan as the next step in the vision for the General Plan and hoped to be able to make it happen. As a neighbor, he looked forward to something cool in his neighborhood and he urged the City to take advantage of this opportunity.

ARTO RINTEELA, the Chair of the RNCC and President of the Fairmede-Hilltop Neighborhood Council, stated he had been following the project for some time. He supported the Hilltop District and the rest of the Hilltop Working Group in rejecting the proposal and allow Prologis, the owner of the property, an opportunity to present its own project. He noted that many community members were concerned since the City had sought public outreach and the community had expressed concerns with the density that had been proposed and with the proximity of schools. As the President of the West County Wastewater District, he stated there was a brand-new plant that was being transitioned and it could not sustain the density associated with the housing that had been proposed in the specific plan.

CORDELL HINDLER, Richmond, a member of the Park Plaza Neighborhood Council, and a member of the Richmond Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, stated he was also part of the working group. While he liked the concept of the project, he preferred something more livable. He liked the idea of the transportation concept but emphasized the need for other opportunities and for more affordable housing and parks. He added that the WCCUSD should have been invited to the meetings related to the specific plan.

BHAVIN KHATRI, President of the Hilltop District Neighborhood Council, stated he lived across from the Hilltop Mall site. Throughout the years of considering the plan, he stated City staff and the property owner had been working with the surrounding community which had consistently requested housing, retail, entertainment and open space. He stated the proposed plan did not support the community's vision or the developer's vision, and the City had not been discussing schools or infrastructure. He added the Hilltop had five apartment complexes with over 1,600 units within a mile radius of the site, and it had been difficult filling up those units. The community wanted medium-density housing consistent with the area but not high-density housing. He emphasized that the retail/entertainment piece was much needed, and through various formats including the Hilltop Advisory Committee, the community had identified what it wanted to see although the City had planned for high-density, which was not supported by the Hilltop community. He supported something in the nature of a 5-year plan, and suggested if the plan was adopted the site would sit empty for the next 15 years.

JANET GALVEZ, Vice President, Investment Officer, Prologis, thanked City staff for their work to date, commended the community engagement and Prologis' community engagement with the local community in the desire to be transparent and gather input from those closest in proximity to the project. She stated that Prologis was the majority owner of the Hilltop Horizon Specific Plan area, with a 55 percent ownership equivalent to 78 acres of the Hilltop Area, and had acquired that ownership in April 2021, the same year the Specific Plan had been initiated.

Since then, there had been various design iterations from industrial to residential and the process was now identifying the right mix that would be feasible from a physical standpoint, a market standpoint and a land use standpoint. Prologis wanted the project to fit in with the existing neighborhood character and be respectful of the existing residents.

Ms. Galvez reiterated some of the comments Prologis submitted on August 20, 2025 expressing the need for visibility. She noted that the market was not currently ripe due to interest rates and tariffs. She explained that areas of alignment of concern with staff were neighborhood connections, maintaining CM-5 zoning flexibility, and a residential program that averaged a blended 40 dwelling units per acre consistent with the current zoning. Prologis wanted short-term activation and long-term success. She stated Prologis was also responsible for bringing over Glydways that was currently on the site, an interim use research and developing autonomous vehicles for transit, and she wanted similar uses supported for the short term while coming up with a conceptual plan that made sense for the site.

JACOB SCHROTH, a one-time Richmond and Hilltop District resident, supported the Prologis plan. He noted that Hilltop had a large concentration of housing but few places for residents to connect, shop, or enjoy community life. Without retail, open space and cultural amenities, Hilltop risked becoming only a bedroom community rather than a vibrant destination. He stated at prior public presentations the majority of community members consistently asked for more amenities and a stronger mix of uses rather than more high-density housing. He recognized the importance of meeting state housing goals but blanket density requirements should not override what was appropriate for Hilltop, and medium density housing could still contribute to affordability and transit use while keeping the character of the community intact.

Mr. Schroth added that high-density housing without matching public infrastructure would strain public infrastructure and services and a balanced plan with a local police presence, open space and retail would create a healthier, safer and more sustainable Hilltop, which should be planned as a destination to bring people together with shops, cultural hubs, parks and gathering places. He urged the development of a community where people wanted to live. He urged a balanced plan with the services the community had asked for.

DON GOSNEY stated that not enough had been done to engage more than the Hilltop community in that the Hilltop Horizon Specific Plan was not just a neighborhood project, it was a regional community endeavor that extended beyond the Hilltop community and beyond the Richmond community. He objected to the fact that so little had been done in the Richmond community to reach out to the General Richmond, San Pablo community, and nothing had been attached to the subject agenda to describe the project. He urged the City to embrace a policy of transparency to better educate the community about the plans and what was being considered. He was especially concerned with impacts to the schools and how the children expected in the new project would be educated. He also asked why the City's many vacant lots that could be used for residential reuse had been ignored.

HOPE DIXON online, who worked at Contra Costa College as a Basic Needs Coordinator, read some comments from students into the record: "I need help with housing because I'm going homeless by the end of the month;" "I'm living with a family relative and helping my mom with the rent. My mom is unemployed, I'm the only one working currently;" "Housing for students coming out of foster care, please;" "I'm currently in a shelter and I'm seeking more permanent housing;" "I would like further help on my unhoused situation;" "Regarding the housing I'm interested in reduced rent programs or subsidized housing opportunities;" "Student housing please;" "Thank you for being so friendly."

Ms. Dixon explained that she did not have housing for college students and in the last year the most recent data showed that 23 percent of the students in Contra Costa College were displaced from housing and more were housing insecure. She stated that affordable housing for young adults, students, and single parents was desperately needed, as were green spaces, and transportation. She encouraged more affordable housing; a lot, quickly.

Chair Harrison opened the discussion of the four questions posed by staff.

Question 1: *Do you support stepping down residential density at the west and east plan area edges to create a mid-density residential buffer (townhomes, multiplexes, stacked flats) adjacent to existing homes?*

Vice Chair Brubaker “totally” supported the City’s proposal for the project. He suggested the previous General Plan showed a lot of density on the mall site while the Prologis scheme was a fairly low-density scheme for all of their property and putting retail investment on other people’s property. He suggested the City’s scheme was the right direction to go. It had a transition to the east and west that would create an edge at the existing residential community that would allow it to fit gracefully with the existing community and build up in the middle where there were no residential units, which increased the scale in the center and would allow many of the things the community wanted; entertainment, retail, and additional employment use. He liked the section that showed that the height would rise from low to high in the center. While he might have issues as to how it would be done, he supported Question 1, residential density stepping down from the west and east.

Commissioner Timmons agreed with the Vice Chair.

Commissioner Golovets noted it was difficult to form a conclusive opinion. While he had no objection and if more density was needed that would be fine, he wanted to see a balance of residential, commercial, business and entertainment.

Chair Harrison suggested that stepping down the density toward existing residential made sense. He was not aware why so much high density would be in the Hilltop area, but regardless he suggested having lower density when getting closer to the existing residential would make it fit in better with the community and enable some connectivity from the existing neighborhood into the new neighborhood of potentially other uses.

Question 2: *Do you support establishing a compact, urban Gateway District near Klose Way and Garrity Way – an area with strong I-80 access – that allows a mix of higher-density housing and active, people-oriented uses such as shops, dining, and public gathering spaces?*

Chair Harrison believed there should be some focal points and to get the whole thing going there had to be a starting point. If one of the nodes would become a focal point for a senior community then some of the housing could be included with some amenities to serve that community, which would be available to other existing or future neighborhoods. There was no employment base at the start and if the employment would be from the surrounding region and not from the mall site, there would have to be some thought of how to get the people out of some of the higher-density housing to the employment. He stated the nodes made sense to him and he suggested one could be around the medical. He otherwise questioned whether a hospital would be viable.

Commissioner Timmons considered the retail aspect and supported the establishment of a compact, urban Gateway District, as suggested, with focused retail spots where there were other areas that were more residential and removed a bit from some of the retail activity.

Vice Chair Brubaker had some issues design-wise and suggested the major transportation corridors at Blume and another area were on the edges, and if the gateway zone were to work he suggested it needed a main street and some kind of easy access to get to the center. By putting the main access points on the edges would not promote the area as a great place to visit. He liked the transit mobility hub and suggested it would be great to hear there would be a BART extension or a street car going down to San Pablo Avenue, but he noted there might just be a bus spot, and he hoped there would be thought to get people out of cars and to the site without having to drive.

To further clarify the transit hub, Ms. Morris noted her understanding that the transit hub was a suggested site and over time the location had moved. She reiterated that the proposed design was a framework and would change over time but there was an almost universal opinion that transit needed to be included in the Hilltop Plan Area. She emphasized that everyone's input was being sought.

Commissioner Golovets liked the concept and the close proximity to I-80.

Commissioner Timmons asked whether affordable housing for teachers, firefighters and police had been integrated into the concept, and Mr. Stark stated the process was not yet at the discussion of particular housing types and the funding to support those housing types. The plans to facilitate that type of housing was allowed and the City's goal was to remove the barriers, support the funding and find ways to encourage the developer or organization that may want to develop that type of project in Richmond, but the details of who would be living in those homes at this point were premature.

Mr. Stark added that there could be a prioritization of certain types of housing or accommodations for people but a percentage requirement was not practical, particularly on property that the City did not own. He confirmed that the City of Richmond had a 10 percent affordable housing requirement in its Inclusionary Housing Policy. A developer could build affordable housing on site or fee out in lieu. In lieu fees would go into the Affordable Housing Fund to allow the City to work with non-profit developers to develop its surplus lands in areas owned by the City, such as the four vacant sites near the BART station.

Question 3: *Do you support creating transitional districts between the medium-density residential areas and the higher-intensity Gateway District that allow a flexible mix of housing, retail, offices, medical uses, and other potential economic drivers?*

Chair Harrison commented that Question 3 was similar to Question 1, and on the question and discussion, it was clarified that the final list of permitted uses would be developed in the next phase of work and the uses were flexible throughout the four zones; mid-density zone, transitional density zone, high-density/intensity zone, and the gateway zone.

Vice Chair Brubaker commented that the diagram of the uses was appropriate but the way Question 3 was phrased was not as appropriate.

Question 4: *Beyond the proposed elements – such as continuous bike and pedestrian pathways, a centralized open space area, an improved transit hub, and enhanced access to Hilltop Lake Park – what other features would you like to see included to further enhance connectivity, health, and recreational opportunities?*

Chair Harrison noted that there was a connection to Hilltop Lake Park but not to Hilltop Park on the other side.

Chair Harrison noted that the southern quadrant was being left out, and that the residential/commercial aspect was so loosely defined that it was hard to get excited. He supported a stronger pitch for how the open spaces would be held together, which he suggested could be done with open space that would have to be popped out more.

Vice Chair Brubaker stated that the question implied that those things were part of the plan, continuous bike and pedestrian pathways, centralized open space area, improved transit hub and enhanced access to Hilltop Lake Park. He stated those were the ones that were important and he supported those aspects of the plan.

Commissioner Golovets wanted to know about the transit hub and whether it was a point of connection to the new developed area offering faster access to BART and the ferry, or whether it was something to be developed.

Chair Harrison referred to the green open space/urban corridor open space that needed to be connected and the need to make them all, existing and to be built, work together to create connectivity and excitement.

Vice Chair Brubaker suggested that the question of density build-out needed to be determined prior to the environmental review and he wanted to know the build-out particulars or at least a range of particulars to allow the environmental review.

Ms. Choi stated that the team fully anticipated to collect the feedback from the Planning Commission and then the City Council in order to have more clarity as to the densities and intensities proposed for each zone, and would not share that information until it was ready to be shared, to be able to inform the type of environmental document involved.

Vice Chair Brubaker stated the General Plan had a minimum and maximum density, the General Plan had been reviewed under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and with the new scheme the density was being spread out in different ways. He asked if the same density overall from what had been shown in the General Plan had been changed.

Mr. Hanson displayed the exhibit showing the existing zoning, Land Plan Concept and the Mall Site Landowner Concept and commented that the question was a programmatic question that was premature at this time, although he clarified that there was a higher end zone to be added to accommodate a transitional zone in between the lowest intensity and the higher intensity zones.

Vice Chair Brubaker stated the General Plan was currently the law, there was a minimum density required on the site given the General Plan and zoning, Prologis was a developer that wanted a lower density, which needed to be approved by the Planning Commission and the City Council, and he hoped the City would expect to get some benefit from doing that rezoning to allow Prologis to have a lower density of housing than currently could be allowed. He suggested it was appropriate to have a lower density and the community was in favor of that but to be a significant project there needed to be significant density in the middle of it. He suggested there was a lot of vagueness involved and he wanted it all to get resolved favorably for both parties.

## **COMMISSION BUSINESS**

### **3. Reports of Officers, Commissioners and Staff**

There were no reports.

### **4. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 P.M.