

Apartment plan sets scene

Bayview Plaza proposed near Bay Park's anticipated trolley line extension shaping up as a model for housing



Protea Properties is proposing a mixed-use development in the mode of transit-adjacent housing, next to a Mid-Coast trolley station site. (Safdie Rabines Architects)

By Jennifer Van Grove

The proposed residential and retail mid-rise complex that would take over the 3.55-acre parking lot at the intersection of Clairemont Drive and Morena Boulevard in Bay Park represents the future of transit-adjacent housing in San Diego, its developer says.

Today, real estate group Protea Properties pulled back the curtain on Bayview Plaza, a 297,084-square-foot, mixed-use project at 2565 Clairemont Drive. The local developer seeks to add 156 mostly market-rate apartments, and 40,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space to the neighborhood that will soon serve as the front porch for the \$2 billion Mid-Coast Trolley extension now under construction.

The project, which is being reviewed by city staffers, could open as early as the summer of 2022, and its location overlooking Mission Bay will likely serve as the standout amenity. That's because, in addition to its coastal vantage point, Bayview Plaza proffers, at least on paper, a live-play-and-ride-transit-to-work lifestyle independent of cars — although resident and transit-rider parking will be available.

“(The project) is an opportunity to set a precedent for good, transit-oriented development in San Diego,” said Andrew Malick, whose firm Malick Infill Development is a consultant for Protea on the project. “This is not your typical, gated residential community. This is an open project; it invites in the neighborhood. We really see it as a gateway for not only transit riders but also the Bay Park community and into Clairemont.”

Bayview, as planned, has 30 studio apartments, 78 one-bedroom units and 48 two-bedroom units above commercial space in two four-story buildings, the highest of which is 76 feet above grade. Of the total units, 16 will be designated as affordable and reserved for families earning up to 50 percent of the area median income. Although there are no pools in the works, residents will have access to two rooftop decks with barbecue areas, dog runs and outdoor fitness amenities.

At street level, Protea is planning three plazas where residents can mix with their neighbors or shop alongside visitors arriving by trolley. In the courtyard fronting the transit stop, the developer is anticipating retail spaces occupied by a co-working company, fine dining and fast-casual restaurants, and small boutiques. The plaza on the backside of the property will likely house a small community market and a sandwich shop. And the courtyard area between the two residential buildings may feature ice cream or coffee vendors, Malick said.

The project also proposes 86 residential parking spaces, 137 commercial spots and 150 stalls reserved for the transit riders. The transit parking commitment is required per the terms of a multimillion-dollar agreement struck last year between Protea, which owns the land, and the San Diego Association of Governments. SANDAG had previously sought to take over the site to provide parking for Mid-Coast Trolley riders through eminent domain litigation.

Bayview's unveiling comes just two weeks after city leaders approved the Morena Corridor Specific Plan, which allows for around five times as many housing units as before in the area alongside the new trolley line. The new plan, however, does not apply to the Protea development because it was already in the works.

That technically makes Bayview exempt from the requirement that 15 percent of units built near that neighborhood's trolley stations be reserved for tenants making less than the area's median income of \$86,300. Still the developer is satisfying that threshold based on previous zoning allowances.

“The underlying zoning of the property allows for the development of 104 units,” a spokesperson for the city said. And, because Protea is providing 16 subsidized units, then it is eligible for a 50 percent density, or 156 units, the spokesperson said.

The city's Development Services Department is reviewing the project. It plans to make a decision on required permits without a public hearing later this month. Additionally, the City Council is expected to make a procedural ruling this fall on the project's transit priority status, which would allow the developer to move forward without an environmental review, Malick said.

The developer declined to share a project cost, citing ongoing negotiations with builders.

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