

Community gets closer look at proposed Watermark Del Mar project

Proposed project includes 48 residential units

By [Kristina Houck](#) ([/staff/kristina-houck/](#)) 6 a.m. Feb. 3, 2016

Del Mar residents got a closer look at a proposed development project during the first of two citizens' participation program meetings on Jan. 28.

Promoted as a "northern gateway to the Village of Del Mar," Watermark Del Mar is a proposed one- and two-story multifamily development project on the vacant lot at Jimmy Durante Boulevard and San Dieguito Drive. Property owner Watermark DM L.P. introduced the project at a July 2013 workshop, which at the time included 54 one- to four-bedroom apartments and townhomes on the 2.37-acre site.

The project now proposed includes 12 structures that would feature 48 studio- to three-bedroom single-level flats and two-story townhomes, resulting in a proposed density of roughly 20 units per acre. Seven of the units would be affordable units, four of which would be given to the city.

The project also includes a recreation room, pool and spa, as well as an underground 108-space parking structure. There would be a single vehicular access point from San Dieguito Drive to the parking structure.

Richard Benson, principal with Benson & Bohl Architects, said the architectural team incorporated the Craftsman-style look that's common in Del Mar to create designs for the coastal-inspired community.

"We want to create something that feels like Del Mar," he said.

In the past year, the project was also refined to work with the current intersection or the possibility of a roundabout or other traffic-calming device at the intersection of Jimmy Durante Boulevard and San Dieguito Drive. According to a draft environmental impact report that was released in December, installing a roundabout at the intersection is "environmentally superior" compared to other alternatives.

Although the project is separate from Watermark Del Mar, the development team had to consider the possibility of a changing intersection in the project plans.

"It could be a traffic signal out there, it could remain as is, or it could be a roundabout, so our design has to be OK for any of those scenarios," said Marne Bouillon, director of design and construction with Watermark DM L.P., a partnership between San Dieguito Land Partners, LLC and Kitchell, a development company with offices in Del Mar. "We had to make some changes so whatever happens, we're OK."

Bouillon said the development team started work on the project in 2011, when early plans included 57 units. After gathering initial feedback from the community, Watermark DM submitted the project application in October 2013. Since then, the development team launched a website for the project and created a list serve database. The team has also held meetings with neighbors and other interested stakeholders, Bouillon said.

The specific plan and other documents related to the project are available at www.watermarkdelmar.com. Although the city deemed the project application complete in December, the development team waited until after the holidays to host two meetings as part of the citizens' participation program.

Del Mar's citizens' participation program was created to gather community input on development proposals early in the design review process. The open house format workshops were held Jan. 28 and 30 at the site of the proposed development.

The development team notified people within 500 feet of the project site about the workshops, Bouillon said. The team also notified residents up to Racetrack View Drive, he added, along with people on the project's list serve.

"We actually walked around and handed out handouts to people we know in town," Bouillon said. "This is their time to come in and give us their comments on our initial presentation."

The development team plans to also give informational presentations to both the Planning Commission and Design Review Board. Three public workshops will follow. The first workshop will address density, affordable housing and aesthetics; the second

workshop will cover traffic, pedestrian access and connectivity, and parking; and the third workshop will look at environmental issues.

The project is then expected to go before the Coastal Commission for the second time, Bouillon said. The project initially went before the commission in May 2015. The Design Review Board, Planning Commission and City Council will then hold hearings on the project.

"We think it's always important to hear from the community," Benson said. "We're trying to create architecture that is welcomed by the community."

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