

Atherton rejects plea of the Currys, will keep controversial development in housing plan

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Steph and Ayesha Curry. AP file photo.

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Steph Curry may be the greatest when it comes to shooting three-pointers, but he shot an air ball when it comes to influencing Atherton housing policy.

Begrudgingly, the Atherton City Council yesterday (Jan. 31) voted to keep the property at 23 Oakwood Boulevard, off of Selby Lane, in the town's plan for 348 more homes. With the zoning the council approved, David Arata, the owner of 23 Oakwood, can build 16 townhouses on the property or keep it a single-family home.

As the Post reported Saturday, Steph and Ayesha Curry wrote a letter to council opposing the specific project at 23 Oakwood.

“We hesitate to add to the ‘not in our backyard’ (literally) rhetoric, but we wanted to send a note before today’s meeting. Safety and privacy for us and our kids continues to be our top priority and one of the biggest reasons we chose Atherton as home. With the density being proposed for 23 Oakwood, there are major concerns in terms of both privacy and safety with three-story townhomes looming directly behind us,” the Currys wrote in their email to Mayor Bill Widmer and Town Manager George Rodericks.

The Currys live in a \$30 million Selby Lane mansion near the Oakwood property.

‘Horrific notion’

The Currys were far from the only residents to oppose the project and its inclusion in the town’s Housing Element, a housing document is required by the state.

“Who knew I had anything in common with Steph and Ayesha Curry?” said resident Pam Silvaroli, who was speaking to oppose the idea of upzoning homes along El Camino Real.

Silvaroli said she is also worried about the “horrific notion of losing privacy and space.”

Silvaroli was one of the many residents who showed up in red “Not Going Anywhere” t-shirts at the council’s Jan. 18 meeting opposing the plan.

Red t-shirts

A few residents wore their red t-shirts again today, opposing plans that included their properties that included Gresham Lane, Stockbridge Avenue, Selby and Cebalo lanes. The council backed away from upzoning or allowing more than what’s currently allowed through town zoning to be built on those parcels.

The council was toying the idea of two different ideas — one would be a straight upzoning of the area, which would have made property owners who wanted to do a tear-down instead build multi-family housing in its place. The other idea would have included homes along Valparaiso and that would have been to allow either multi-family or single-family homes to be built in the place of a home that gets torn down.

Instead, resident Tony Sanchez called for more accessory dwelling units, or granny units, to be built instead. Sanchez also pointed out that they were sitting in the town's brand new Town Center, which has no housing as part of the recently completed structure.

"Why not set an example and build housing here?" Sanchez said to applause.

Green t-shirts

At yesterday's meeting, about a dozen people showed up in green t-shirts saying "like a good neighbor, 23 Oakwood stays there." Like the Currys, those residents were against the inclusion of the Oakwood property.

Redwood City Councilwomen Kaia Eakin and Diane Howard both attended the meeting to express concern about the 23 Oakwood project, which borders their town.

Eakin and Howard both pointed out that the area does not have proper drainage and limited parking along the small street.

Many of the neighbors to 23 Oakwood expressed similar issues with the project, saying their neighborhood is being sacrificed to the state.

"You may need to sacrifice Oakwood Drive today to fulfill the (state's) requirements, but I ask of you to take a look at mitigating everything possible" if the project is proposed, said resident David Perry.

Perry specifically requested the city study putting a stop light at Selby and El Camino Real.

All five members of the council wavered at the inclusion of the property in the housing plan, with some offering up alternative ideas. But they said that Arata is planning to build no matter what, and has already talked to Town Manager George Rodericks about developing the property regardless of the housing element.

Aside from the 23 Oakwood property, the town is relying on accessory dwelling units or ADUs, lot splits and housing at Menlo College and Menlo School to meet the state's quota for future housing.

Councilman Rick Degolia remained steadfast in keeping the housing element restricted to ADUs, lot splits and school developments.

The town is sending the plans to the state, which has about two months to tell the town if the Housing Element is approved or not. If not, the town will have to submit another version. However, the longer the town goes without a state-approved Housing Element, the possibility of the town getting sued grows.