



CITY OF SAN JUAN BAUTISTA PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

DATE: SEPTEMBER 1, 2026

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING DEPARTMENT

FROM: ARIELLE GOODSPEED, PLANNING MANAGER

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TITLE: 70 MUCKELEMI STREET – INFORMAL PROJECT REVIEW OF PROPOSED SAN BENITO HEALTH FOUNDATION MEDICAL CLINIC, SITE DESIGN, LOT CONFIGURATION, AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

Receive the presentation and provide preliminary, nonbinding comments and direction regarding the conceptual design, site layout, lot configuration, land use relationship, and future development considerations for the proposed San Benito Health Foundation medical clinic at 70 Muckelemi Street.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission review the conceptual submittal and provide preliminary feedback focused on: (1) building architecture, gateway design, streetscape, parking, landscaping, pedestrian circulation, and related site design features; and (2) the proposed lot line adjustment/site reconfiguration, including the relationship between Commercial and Mixed-Use General Plan and zoning designations and the proposed clinic and future housing areas. No project approval or entitlement action is requested at this meeting.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The San Benito Health Foundation is proposing a new two-story medical clinic at 70 Muckelemi Street near the western entrance to San Juan Bautista. The current conceptual plan set dated August 21, 2026 depicts a medical clinic, associated parking and circulation, landscaped areas, an entry gate and welcome feature, pedestrian connections, and a connection to a future housing area. The plans also include a "Lot Line Use" analysis evaluating alternative parcel configurations intended to address the relationship between Commercial and Mixed-Use portions of the larger site. The applicant is seeking preliminary, nonbinding Planning Commission feedback before finalizing the site layout and entitlement strategy.

The current plan set identifies approximately 30,000 square feet of clinic floor area plus approximately 1,638 square feet of attached covered parking, for a total building area of approximately 31,638 square feet. The parking calculation identifies 134 spaces as required and 136 spaces as provided. The cover sheet, however, retains an older floor-area-ratio calculation based on 15,172 square feet, which will need to be reconciled in a future formal resubmittal. The conceptual site plan also identifies an entry gate feature, low wall, pedestrian entry walkway, entry plaza welcome feature, seating, herb garden, landscaped areas, parking, and a connection to the future housing area.

This informal review is intended to obtain early Planning Commission feedback before the applicant finalizes the project design and determines the appropriate entitlement and parcel configuration strategy. The comments provided are advisory and nonbinding. A future formal application will be reviewed for compliance with the Municipal Code, General Plan, Historic Preservation Plan, Design Guidelines, CEQA, and all other applicable requirements.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Planning Commission has historically provided an Informal Project Review process through which potential and future project applicants may present conceptual proposals for preliminary, nonbinding feedback before formal project consideration. Although the Municipal Code does not establish Informal Project Review as a separate land use entitlement, it does provide broad authority for the Planning Commission to consider the types of land use and development issues raised by this project. SJBMC Section 11-16-060 assigns the Planning Commission responsibility for matters including General Plan and zoning amendments, Planned Unit Developments, subdivisions, Conditional Use Permits, variances, Site Plan and Design Review, exceptions, appeals, and other matters referred to the Commission by the City Manager. SJBMC Section 2-3-145 further establishes the duties and powers of the Planning Commission consistent with California Planning and Zoning Law.

For this project, the most directly relevant review framework is Chapter 11-18, Site Plan and Design Review. That chapter identifies the design and site planning considerations the Planning Commission may ultimately evaluate, including architecture, compatibility with surrounding development, landscaping, parking and circulation, implementation of the General Plan and related plans, and application of the City's design standards. Future formal review would also be guided by the findings in SJBMC Section 11-18-040, including consistency with the Municipal Code and General Plan; protection of the City's heritage and historic resources; compatibility of architecture, materials, colors, landscaping, parking, utilities, signs, and lighting; harmonious site configuration; appropriate building massing and architectural detailing; safe pedestrian and vehicular circulation; and adequacy of public facilities.

Accordingly, the purpose of the current Informal Project Review is to provide early Planning Commission feedback on matters that may later be considered through the formal entitlement process, including site layout, architecture and design, parking and circulation, landscaping, land use compatibility, and the relationship of the project to applicable General Plan and zoning designations. No formal action is requested, and comments provided by the Planning Commission

are preliminary and nonbinding and do not constitute project approval, creation of a vested right, or a commitment to a particular entitlement or CEQA determination.

As part of the City's forthcoming Zoning and Municipal Code updates, staff intends to bring the preliminary project review process forward for further discussion and clarification. Potential approaches may include: (1) a staff-level preliminary review in which a conceptual application is routed to applicable departments and agencies and consolidated written comments are provided to the applicant; and/or (2) a Planning Commission-level review for broader land use, site planning, design, and policy feedback at a public meeting. No recommendation regarding either approach is being made as part of this item. The appropriate process, application requirements, fees, and respective roles of staff and the Planning Commission will be evaluated as part of future code and procedural updates.

Current conceptual submittal:

The August 21, 2026 conceptual plan set includes the following principal components:

- Two-story medical clinic with approximately 30,000 square feet of clinic floor area and approximately 1,638 square feet of attached covered parking.
- 136 parking stalls, including EV-capable and EV-charging spaces.
- Entry gate feature, low-height walls, pedestrian entry walkway, entry driveway, entry plaza/welcome feature, seating areas, herb garden, and landscaped open areas.
- A physical connection from the clinic site toward a future housing area.
- Conceptual Spanish/Mission/Mediterranean-influenced architecture with stucco-like wall surfaces, tile roof forms, arches, arcades, towers/chimney elements, recessed openings, and varied roof massing.
- A lot-line/use analysis evaluating alternative parcel configurations and the distribution of Commercial and Mixed-Use areas.

The three-dimensional views on Sheets A-0.21 and A-0.22 show a substantially more historically referential architectural concept than a conventional contemporary medical office building. The elevations on Sheets A-6.0 and A-6.1 incorporate arcades, arched openings, varied roof planes, and vertical elements that reduce the appearance of a single large rectangular mass. These concepts provide a useful starting point for discussion, but additional refinement will be necessary to demonstrate consistency with the City's gateway and design policies.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS:

Building Design, Gateway Character, Streetscape, Parking, and Landscaping

SJBMC Section 11-18-010 establishes comprehensive design review objectives that recognize the City's historic uniqueness; encourage harmonious structures, landscaping, parking areas, utilities, and signs; promote site planning compatible with surrounding properties; implement the General Plan; and foster creative, high-quality design. SJBMC Section 11-18-040 requires findings addressing historic character, architectural compatibility, massing, site configuration, landscaping, circulation, and public facilities.

Because this property is located at the Muckelemei Street gateway, staff recommends that the Commission evaluate the project as both an individual medical facility and as a major visual introduction to San Juan Bautista. The gateway should signal arrival into a historic small-town environment rather than read as a stand-alone suburban medical campus.

The current architectural concept uses several features that are generally responsive to the City's historic design direction, including tile roof forms, stucco-like walls, arches, arcades, recessed openings, and varied building massing. The Commission may wish to comment on whether these elements sufficiently reference San Juan Bautista's Mission, Spanish Colonial/Mediterranean, and Monterey traditions, and whether additional detailing, material authenticity, human-scale articulation, or simplification is appropriate.

Staff also recommends particular attention to the following design topics:

- Gateway monumentation and entry feature: The plans identify an entry gate and welcome feature, but the design and materials are not yet detailed. The gateway feature should be attractive, inviting, natural in appearance, and historically compatible rather than modern or corporate in character.
- Building mass and scale: At approximately 30,000 square feet of clinic space, the building is substantially larger than many buildings within the historic core. The design should continue to break the building into smaller visual components through roof variation, wall offsets, arcades, recessed entries, balconies or similar historically compatible features.
- All elevations: Architectural detailing should continue around all publicly visible elevations rather than being concentrated only at the primary entrance.
- Parking: The proposed 136-space parking field is visually significant. Parking should be screened from Muckelemei Street and Highway 156 through low walls, berming where appropriate, and substantial landscaping while maintaining safe visibility and access.
- Landscaping: The gateway corridor should include a strong tree canopy and layered planting. Tree selections should draw from species identified in the City Design Guidelines where appropriate and should reinforce the gateway character, shade parking areas, and soften views of the parking field and building.
- Pedestrian circulation: The entry plaza, walkway, seating, and future housing connection are positive concepts. The final design should provide clear, direct, shaded pedestrian connections between the public sidewalk, clinic entrance, parking, future housing, and surrounding street network.
- Refuse, utilities, mechanical equipment, lighting and signs: These features should be integrated into the architecture and landscape and screened from gateway views. Lighting and signage should be pedestrian-scaled and compatible with the historic character of the city.

2. Lot Line Adjustment and Parcel Configuration

The conceptual submittal indicates that the applicant is evaluating modifications to the existing parcel boundaries to create a larger and more functional development area for the proposed clinic while maintaining a separate area for potential future housing. Sheet A-1.3 illustrates the potential lot-line configurations. The Planning Commission is not being asked to approve a Lot Line Adjustment as part of this Informal Project Review.

A Lot Line Adjustment changes legal parcel boundaries but does not, by itself, amend the City's adopted General Plan land use or zoning boundaries. Accordingly, where an adjusted parcel crosses an existing Commercial and Mixed-Use designation or zoning boundary, the resulting parcel may contain more than one General Plan designation and/or zoning district. Development within each portion of the property would remain subject to the applicable General Plan designation, zoning district, permitted uses, and development standards unless the City separately approves an applicable legislative change.

The current concept should therefore be evaluated not simply based on the acreage assigned to each resulting parcel, but on whether the proposed adjustment creates a more functional and appropriately designed development. Creating a larger clinic parcel may provide additional flexibility for building placement, parking orientation and screening, pedestrian circulation, landscaping, gateway improvements, open space, drainage and utilities, and separation between the clinic and potential future housing.

As the project is refined, the applicant should provide a plan clearly identifying the existing and proposed parcel boundaries, General Plan designation boundaries, zoning boundaries, clinic footprint, parking and circulation areas, future housing area, and any shared access, utility, drainage, parking, or other easements. This will allow the city to evaluate the Lot Line Adjustment together with the overall site design and determine whether the resulting parcels and development remain consistent with applicable General Plan and zoning requirements.

3. Relationship of Proposed Uses to Commercial and Mixed-Use Zoning

The current concept proposes a medical clinic together with an area identified for potential future housing. Importantly, the proposed clinic building and principal clinic use are shown entirely within the Commercial zoning district. Portions of the associated parking, driveways and circulation, landscaping, and other site improvements are shown extending into the Mixed-Use portion of the property.

SJBMC Section 11-02-050 establishes the uses permitted or conditionally permitted within each zoning district. The City's current use matrix does not expressly identify a medical clinic as a standalone permitted or conditional use within the Mixed-Use district. However, the Mixed-Use district is not limited exclusively to residential development. SJBMC Section 11-04-020 establishes additional standards for Mixed Use development and expressly contemplates both residential and commercial development within the district, subject to the applicable requirements of the Municipal Code.

The City's parking regulations also contemplate parking associated with commercial and mixed uses within the Mixed-Use district. Under Chapter 11-11, parking areas are subject to requirements addressing location, access, circulation, dimensions, paving, screening, landscaping, bicycle parking, lighting, and Site Plan and Design Review. Accordingly, one option for the applicant to consider is maintaining the clinic building and principal clinic use entirely within the Commercial zoning district while utilizing portions of the Mixed-Use area for parking, driveways, circulation, landscaping, and other site improvements to the extent those activities are allowed under the Municipal Code.

This approach would require the applicant to demonstrate through the revised plans that each component located within the Mixed-Use area is permitted and complies with the applicable development, parking, landscaping, access, easement, and Site Plan and Design Review requirements. The proposed Lot Line Adjustment could assist in creating a larger and more functional clinic parcel while retaining the underlying General Plan and zoning framework.

4. Mixed Use Designation and Future Zoning Code Considerations

Separate from determining how the current project can comply with the existing Municipal Code, the project has identified a potential issue for consideration as part of the City's broader Zoning and Municipal Code updates.

The City's General Plan Mixed Use designation is intended to accommodate a combination of residential and commercial activities and support access to employment, services, and other community-serving uses. Although the General Plan does not specifically identify a medical clinic as a separate land use category, a community-serving outpatient clinic may be consistent with the broader commercial, employment, and service functions contemplated by the Mixed-Use designation. The principal issue presented by the current project therefore appears to be the Zoning Code use matrix, which does not presently identify a medical clinic as an allowed use within the MU district, rather than an apparent fundamental incompatibility between a clinic and the General Plan's Mixed Use land use concept.

As part of the City's forthcoming Zoning and Municipal Code updates or as part of the applicant application, the city could consider whether the use matrix should be updated to expressly address medical clinics and or medical and professional office uses within the Mixed-Use district, and the appropriate level of review for such uses. This could provide greater clarity for future projects and better align the permitted-use tables with the range of commercial and community-serving activities contemplated within mixed-use areas.

No Zoning Code amendment is proposed or recommended as part of this Informal Project Review. For the current application, staff and the applicant should continue to evaluate the project under the existing General Plan and Municipal Code, including whether the clinic can remain entirely within the Commercial portion of the site while parking, circulation, landscaping, future housing, and other improvements are appropriately located within the Mixed-Use portion.

PLANNING COMMISSION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Staff recommends that the Commission focus its informal comments on the following questions:

- Does the proposed architectural concept appropriately reflect San Juan Bautista's historic character and the importance of the Muckelemei Street gateway? What design elements should be strengthened, removed, or modified?
- Does the site plan create an attractive and inviting gateway, including appropriate building orientation, entry monumentation, landscaping, streetscape, pedestrian connections, and screening of parking?
- Is the scale and massing of the proposed clinic appropriate for this gateway location, and what additional articulation or architectural detailing should be incorporated?

- Does the proposed parking layout adequately balance operational needs with the City's goals for landscaping, pedestrian orientation, and minimizing the visual prominence of parking?
- What feedback does the Commission have regarding the conceptual lot line adjustment and the relationship between the Commercial clinic area and the Mixed Use/future housing area?
- Does the proposed or modified parcel and site configuration provide an appropriate relationship between the Commercial and Mixed-Use portions of the property, including maintaining the clinic building and principal clinic use within the Commercial district while accommodating parking, circulation, landscaping, potential future housing, and other permitted activities within the Mixed-Use portion?
- What additional information should the applicant provide before formal entitlement review?

Following the informal review, the applicant may revise the project concept and parcel configuration based on Planning Commission feedback. Staff will then determine the formal application package required for the revised proposal. Depending on the final scope, future applications may include Site Plan and Design Review, Historic Resources Board review for gateway compatibility, a Lot Line Adjustment, Planned Unit Development, Use Permit, General Plan Amendment, Zoning Map or text amendment, and/or other permits. The final entitlement pathway will depend on the revised site plan, location of proposed uses, parcel configuration, and applicable State and local law.

CEQA REQUIREMENT:

This discussion item is not a project pursuant to Section 15378 of the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") Guidelines because it involves only the exchange of information and preliminary direction and does not constitute a commitment to a definite course of action.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no direct fiscal impact associated with receiving this informational presentation. Staff time related to preparation and presentation of this item is included within the department's regular operating budget.

ATTACHMENTS

1. August 21, 2026 Conceptual Plan Set – San Benito Health Foundation New Clinic