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City panel greenlights construction of new fast-food restaurants

By Joseph Ditzler | jditzler@sfnewmexican.com Aug 8, 2018

A Santa Fe city board has given the go-ahead for construction of two drive-thru fast-food restaurants at Sawmill Road and St. Francis Drive.

The Board of Adjustment granted a special-use permit to J Fam LLC, which plans to build the restaurants. One will be a Taco Bell, but the second restaurant has not been identified.

The permit allows the developer to build within 200 feet of an area zoned residential, in this case of the railway right of way along the property's northwest side.

One area resident spoke against the restaurant plan at Tuesday's board meeting, saying it would increase an odor and noise problem already plaguing the neighborhood to the west.

The woman, who declined to provide her name, said the lights from cars entering the approximately 2-acre site would shine directly across the railroad and Galisteo Road into homes.

"I have no problem with a restaurant," she said during the hearing. "It's the lighting and the smell."

She said that restaurants already sited along Sawmill and Galisteo roads — Wendy's, Church's Chicken and Posas El Merendero Tamale Factory and Restaurant — create food odors.

Jennifer Jenkins, of project managers JenkinsGavin, in Santa Fe, agreed to change the site plan to face the drive-thru kiosks toward St. Francis Drive and away from Galisteo Road and the neighborhood beyond. Board of Adjustment Chairman Gary Friedman suggested the change after hearing the resident's concerns.

The property, owned by Edgar and Margaret Jones, is leased to J Fam LLC, Jenkins told area residents at a neighborhood notification meeting in April. The site is zoned light industrial, in which restaurants are a permitted use.

The site, where an auto repair shop once stood, is opposite a Giant gas station and convenience store on Sawmill Road. The next step toward building the restaurants is a city plan review and application for building permits.

J Fam already has installed a shared driveway with the adjacent business, Premier Distributing, on Sawmill Road, Jenkins said. The driveway will facilitate right turns in and out of the restaurant property, she said.

According to a traffic study submitted with the special-use permit application, the “proposed development will have no significant adverse impact” on the streets and St. Francis-Sawmill intersection nearby.

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