

MINUTES

ADJOURNED

JOINT CITY COUNCIL

AND

PLANNING COMMISSION

MEETING

OCTOBER 25, 2004

A special meeting of the City Council and Planning Commission of the City of Rolling Hills Estates was called to order at 6:07 p.m. at the Rolling Hills Estates City Hall, 4045 Palos Verdes Drive North, by MAYOR MITCHELL.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Addleman, Mitchell, Seamans*, Zerunyan, Zuckerman

*COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS arrived at 6:17 p.m.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Bayer, Conway*, Killen, O'Day, Rein, Somers, Vanden Bos

*COMMISSIONER CONWAY left at 9:15 p.m.

CITY STAFF PRESENT: Doug Prichard, City Manager

David Wahba, Planning Director

Niki Cutler, Senior Planner

INTRODUCTIONS

MAYOR MITCHELL stated the purpose of this meeting is to discuss the proposed master plan development standards for the commercial district and how they would apply to three specific projects. She requested the meeting participants introduce themselves to the audience.

Planning Director Wahba provided an extensive overview of the entire master plan area. He noted that various architectural styles are incorporated into the plan and noted development standards would apply to parking, setbacks, height limits, etc. He noted that two projects have already been approved with three more forthcoming over the next few months.

Jack Wong, JWA Consultants, noted that the City is at a crossroads in terms of development. He noted that the development standards were presented to the Mixed-Use Committee and it was their opinion to divide the master plan area into four districts for application of development standards. Extensive discussion ensued regarding the standards that would be best suited for particular districts.

Commissioner Conway inquired if any consideration had been given to minimum building density.

Commissioner Conway suggested the maximum development potential be formed through an environmental impact report to create a baseline for development density. He then inquired as to how the height would be measured.

Discussion ensued regarding where the height line should be measured. Commissioner Killen suggested

working with the character of the slope, particularly in District 4.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS inquired as to the "central park" concept. Mr. Wong noted his concurrence with that line of thought although the reality of creating this type of park immediately creates a zoning conflict within the building environment. He noted that as developers move through the process, discussion may take place regarding the desire for pocket parks.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS then inquired if neighborhood compatibility applies to this concept. Planning Director Wahba noted the precise plan of design would allow for design and compatibility to be incorporated into the approval process.

Mr. Wong noted that the public rights-of-way should be connected for easy accessibility by the public.

Commissioner Conway inquired as to the transfer of development rights and how this can be used for acquisition of parkland.

Commissioner O'Day noted his concern with remarks referring to developments similar to Pasadena developments. He noted that the commercial district is essentially built out.

Mr. Wong noted that he is aware the commercial district is not a regional draw, but believed residential and commercial can co-exist on a smaller scale as it now lacks an identity.

Commissioner O'Day noted that it may make sense to have transfer development rights in place to control the increase in condominiums and decrease in retail.

Mr. Wong noted that the environmental impact report will reflect what can be accommodated. Planning Director Wahba then explained the EIR process.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN noted that the area needs to be looked at with existing and potential densities as there are still infrastructure constraints to consider.

Planning Director Wahba noted that once a residential use is in place, commercial district trip generations will decrease.

Commissioner Conway suggested the City determine the limits of the existing infrastructure.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS noted her concern with how this plan will accommodate existing commercial tenants.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN noted that the master plan is an urban concept, but that the existing commercial businesses serve more than the neighborhood itself. He urged a balance of services as stated in the General Plan.

Mr. Wong noted that mixed use does not have to happen vertically, but could happen horizontally as well.

Mr. Wong suggested issuing a maximum amount of building permits, with the infrastructure being built in phases.

Commissioner Bayer reiterated the purpose of this plan is to revitalize the downtown area, but not necessarily with larger buildings.

City Manager Prichard noted the reason the City pursued this master plan concept was to revitalize the commercial district so preservation of viable commercial enterprises should be considered in the process.

Planning Director Wahba suggested undertaking an EIR while these projects are being processed.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN requested consideration of floor area ratio calculations rather than basing decisions on the number of units.

MIXED USE PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

A. EXISTING CARWASH FACILITY AT 627 DEEP VALLEY DRIVE

Senior Planner Cutler provided a staff report (as per agenda material).

Bruce Saroudi, Applicant, Peninsula Carwash, provided an extensive history of his project which includes a small retail component.

Jan Van Tilburg, Architect, noted his opinion that there is sufficient retail in the area, but the district lacks housing. He provided an extensive description of the project.

Commissioner Killen suggested studying the building heights. Mr. Van Tilburg noted he would take this under consideration.

Commissioner O'Day suggested reducing the number of units and making them larger with fewer garages as he believed this would be more attractive in the City.

Commissioner O'Day noted that even though this particular site will have less traffic, the City as a whole will have increased traffic due to this and other projects.

B. FORMER ARCO GAS STATION AT 828 SILVER SPUR ROAD

Senior Planner Cutler provided a staff report (as per agenda material).

Aaron Swerdlow, Applicant, provided an extensive overview of the project.

MAYOR PRO TEM ADDLEMAN stated that this is the first time he, COUNCILMAN ZERUNYAN and ZUCKERMAN have reviewed these projects.

MAYOR MITCHELL commented that the City is in a state of flux because of different code and development standards and is attempting to bring mixed use to the commercial district. She noted that part of the plan is to take a look as to what will bring developers to the commercial district and assist them in proposing quality projects as well as assessing what developments are needed in the area. She noted that this project was extensively reviewed by the Mixed Use Committee.

Commissioner Vanden Bos noted that a previous developer provided a model which assisted greatly in visualizing their project. Additionally, COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS noted it would also be helpful to show the building in relationship to the surrounding buildings. MAYOR PRO TEM ADDLEMAN requested that a CAD rendering be provided as well.

City Manager Prichard noted that there was a certain amount of trepidation the Mixed Use Committee had in considering a modern-style building for that site as well as concerns about the height. He noted that the question now becomes whether or not to compromise on the vision of the façade treatment. He noted that the Committee had many of the same concerns previously expressed. Additionally, he cautioned against tinkering too much with a project's key elements as sometimes the best features are eliminated.

Commissioner Killen noted it is important to recognize that the guidance of the Mixed Use Committee has been under the umbrella of staff and consultants and that good advice was received from the consultants.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN noted he is looking for fundamental changes with a size reduction of the project and was not in favor of tandem parking. He noted that the developer needs to make a decision to proceed or wait until the master plan is completed.

Extensive discussion ensued regarding the height with regards to a one-story unit that appears to be two stories from the outside. Mr. Swerdlow noted that the ceilings are proposed to be higher in order to provide a feeling of space for the unit.

Mr. Swerdlow implored the COUNCIL to appreciate the work the developer has put in to present a viable project, and believed it could become one that the public supports.

After extensive discussion, it was noted that no consensus was reached other than requesting all applicants to submit a model and/or picture to assist in visualizing these projects and how they fit into the commercial district.

Commissioner Vanden Bos noted that this is the only District 1 property that does not back up to a hill.

Commission O'Day strongly recommended that COUNCIL adopt a policy to require the developer to provide silhouettes of all projects as well.

At 9:45 p.m., MAYOR MITCHELL called for a brief recess.

At 9:58 p.m., the CITY COUNCIL reconvened with MAYOR MITCHELL, MAYOR PRO TEM ADDLEMAN, COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS, COUNCILMAN ZERUNYAN and COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN present.

C. 827 DEEP VALLEY DRIVE (EXISTING MEDICAL OFFICE BUILDING)

Senior Planner Cutler provided a staff report (as per agenda material).

Craig Knickerbocker, Applicant, provided an overview of the project which is intended to be marketed to entry level buyers. He noted that a significant amount of parking will be provided by relying on the existing parking structure. He proposed developing the site to resemble a "village" look.

Bob Garstein, noted that this presentation is only preliminary as it is their desire to receive input from the COUNCIL and Planning Commission.

COUNCILMAN ZERUNYAN inquired as to the slope stability with Mr. Knickerbocker stating that a geologist reported this slope to be in good shape.

COUNCILMAN ZERUNYAN then inquired as to the insurability of the property. Mr. Knickerbocker noted that they have not dealt with this issue as yet.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN noted his opinion that this property has some "cathedral" elements and appears to be top heavy for a hillside project. Mr. Garstein noted that as the project moves on, it may be scaled down, but that they would like to create some individuality at this location.

Commissioner O'Day inquired if these homes would include low income housing. Planning Director Wahba noted the matter is still being considered.

Discussion ensued regarding tandem parking with COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN inquiring if this would apply to the two bedroom units. Additionally, he noted that he would like to see some type of park in the development.

Mr. Knickerbocker noted that he would like to see this development include a pedestrian connection to The Brickwalk.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN inquired as to fire as well as trash collection access points.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN requested a closer look at the topography of the site.

Items mentioned for future discussion included a City-mandated minimum number of residential units that mixed-use developments could support, and commercial to residential FAR percentage calculations in lieu of dwelling units per acre.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS expressed her desire to see variation from the street.

Commissioner O'Day noted that there seems to be a willingness to allow increased height for buildings by the hillside.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN suggested extending District 2 to Deep Valley Drive from the eastern end taking into account existing uses.

Mr. Wong indicated that Deep Valley Drive would have to be completely renovated for inclusion in that district and that what COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN wished to achieve might be handled by leaving the Town and Country Shopping Center out of the Master Plan area.

City Manager Prichard noted that staff will bring back amended language for review.

In regards to moving the environmental impact report forward, City Manager Prichard suggested retaining a consultant from the approved list, contacting them immediately to obtain a scope of service for undertaking an EIR, and bringing back a timeline for processing these projects concurrently. It was suggested to present this information to the Mixed Use Committee prior to the next joint meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Approved,

Hope J. Nolan Douglas R. Prichard

Deputy City Clerk City Clerk