



MINUTES

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

JANUARY 25, 2010

The meeting of the El Cajon City Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & MOMENT OF SILENCE

ROLL CALL:

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Anthony SOTTILE, Chairman
Anthony AMBROSE
Star BALES
Darrin J. MROZ

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Paul CIRCO

OTHERS PRESENT: Melissa AYRES, Director of Community Development
Barbara K. RAMIREZ, Principal Planner
Eric CRAIG, Assistant Planner
Barbara LUCK, Assistant City Attorney
Michael GRIFFITHS, Deputy Director – Public Works
Ron Luis VALLES, Administrative Secretary

SOTTILE briefly explained the mission of the Planning Commission. SOTTILE welcomed comments under Public Comments. No one came forward.

CONSENT CALENDAR: Motion was made by AMBROSE, seconded by BALES, to adopt the Planning Commission minutes of January 11, 2010; carried 4-0 (CIRCO – absent).

Motion was made by AMBROSE, seconded by BALES, to authorize the request for increased fence height around half of the parking area at an industrial property located on the northeast side of Friendship Drive, between John Towers Avenue and Billy Mitchell Drive, and is addressed 1919 Friendship Drive; carried 4-0 (CIRCO – absent).

GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 2010-01, ZONE RECLASSIFICATION NO. 2301 AND AMENDMENT OF SPECIFIC PLAN NO. 182

This was a public hearing on a city-initiated proposal to: 1) add the General Plan Special Development Area No. 9 designation to five parcels on the north side of Linda Way; 2) expand the boundaries of Specific Plan No. 182 to encompass the same property; 3) amend the text of Specific Plan No. 182 to allow additional flexibility in building height, lot coverage and building setback (yard) requirements, subject to the granting of a conditional use permit; and 4) rezone five properties on Linda Way zoned R-1-6 (Single-Family) and two properties on Chambers Street zoned R-3 (Multiple-Family) to R-5 (Multi-Family) zone.

APNs: 487-180-09, -10, -11, -12, & -13 and 487-191-14 & -15
General Plan: High Density Residential (HR)
Zoning: Single Family Zone (R-1-6) & Multiple-Family Zone (R-3)
Applicant: City of El Cajon / 619.441.1700
Project Planner: Melissa Ayres / 619.441.1700

AYRES summarized the staff report and noted that the findings support this project. Additionally, an Initial Study and Negative Declaration were completed and there were no significant impacts found on this project.

SOTTILE mentioned that it is a beautiful project and sought clarification on tax credits and financing. AYRES replied that the applicant will apply for federal tax credits and the City's Redevelopment Agency is partially funding the project.

SOTTILE announced the public hearing is open and invited any speakers to the podium.

Mr. Neil McCARTY, 2075 Dryden Road, El Cajon CA 92020, owns property on Chambers Street. He noted that even though he supports development, he had concerns about the use of the City's and taxpayer's money to support this project. He said that poor planning in the past allowed for the over-development of apartments that have not benefited the tax base. He also cited concerns over inadequate parking, setback requirements, and how this project will interface with the proposed long-range plans with Specific Plan No. 182.

Mr. Lindsay QUACKENBUSH, Affirmed Housing Group, 13520 Evening Creek Drive, Suite 360, San Diego, CA 92128, is the applicant.

[AYRES recommended that the applicant's comments pertaining to the development proposal be delayed until the Conditional Use Permit No. 2107 application is heard following these items.]

No other speakers approached the podium.

Motion was made by AMBROSE, seconded by MROZ to close the public hearing; carried 4-0 (CIRCO – absent).

AMBROSE commended staff for work on this project.

Motion was made by AMBROSE, seconded by MROZ, to adopt the proposed Resolution No. 10594 recommending City Council adoption of the Negative Declaration and approval of General Plan Amendment No. 2010-01; carried 4-0 (CIRCO – absent).

Motion was made by AMBROSE, seconded by BALES, to adopt the proposed Resolution No. 10595 reaffirming City Council adoption of the Negative Declaration and recommending City Council approval of Zone Reclassification No. 2301; carried 4-0 (CIRCO – absent).

Motion was made by AMBROSE, seconded by SOTTILE, to adopt the proposed Resolution No. 10596 reaffirming City Council adoption of the Negative Declaration and recommending the City Council approve amendments to Specific Plan No. 182, as noted therein; carried 4-0 (CIRCO – absent).

These items are tentatively scheduled for a City Council public hearing on February 9, 2010 at 7 p.m.

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 2107

This was a public hearing on a request for approval of a conditional use permit to construct a four-story, mixed-use development on the north and southeast corners of Chambers Street and Linda Way consisting of 49 senior residences and approximately 2,000 square feet of commercial space. Included in this application is a request to: 1) construct a mixed-use development; 2) exceed the applicable building height limits; 3) increase lot coverage; 4) reduce the parking requirement; and 5) reduce building setback requirements.

APNs:	487-180-09, -10, -11, -12, & -13 and 487-191-14 & -15
General Plan:	High Density Residential (HR)
Zoning:	Pending High Density, High Rise (R-5)
Applicant:	Affirmed Housing Group / 858.679.2828
Project Planner:	Melissa Ayres / 619.441.1700

AYRES presented the staff report. She noted that the applicant worked out the details of this project with City staff and the El Cajon Community Development Corporation's Design Review Committee.

She said that even though parking is set at 0.75 spaces per residential unit, other projects show it is a reasonable amount for senior citizens. As a convenience, a shuttle or "flex" car will also be available to the senior residents.

She reaffirmed that the Initial Study and Negative Declaration found no significant impacts on the project. Staff believed that the Commission and Council can make the necessary findings to support this project.

AYRES requested that an additional condition #5.g. be added to the proposed Resolution No. 10598, noting: "Carports shall be metal frame with a solid roof." She had previously discussed this additional condition with the applicants and they had no objections.

AMBROSE asked about the age group of the seniors; was it age 62 and above? He also sought income requirements and projected percentages of disabled seniors in the project. He was concerned about adding 2,000 square feet of commercial space in the downtown area, since many current commercial properties remain vacant.

BALES believed that the seniors would be encouraged to frequent the commercial shops in the development. She noted that there is a new culture where seniors walk more and don't use cars. She doesn't believe the limited parking would be a problem.

SOTTILE opened the public hearing and invited any speakers to address the Commission.

Mr. Lindsay QUACKENBUSH, Affirmed Housing Group, 13520 Evening Creek Drive, Suite 360, San Diego, CA 92128, is the applicant. He returned to the podium and thanked AYRES and staff for proactively working with them on this process. He mentioned that this project is designed as an active community and will bring progressive architecture to the city. The senior citizen residents would be age 62 and above.

He spoke about landscaping plans which would include raised platforms for a garden where seniors could have their own planting plot. There will also be a public park that will provide social interaction not only senior residents but also with the neighboring community.

QUACKENBUSH mentioned that it would be a challenge to find commercial tenants, but they will offer incentives such as no rent for the first two years. He emphasized that the applicant is a for-profit corporation and the property will remain on the tax rolls. They agreed with all the conditions.

SOTTILE asked if a market study was completed for the development and QUACKENBUSH replied affirmatively.

In reply to AMBROSE, the speaker mentioned that the salary range for qualifying seniors is in the upper \$30,000 to \$40,000. Additionally, he said that the rent would be about \$750 a month for a one-bedroom unit.

AMBROSE asked what is the estimated cost of the project. QUACKENBUSH replied about \$12 million, not including the land.

AMBROSE asked about the percentage of disabled residents. The speaker answered that 100% of the units are disabled accessible / adaptable and that two of the units would be fully ADA –compliant.

AMBROSE shared concerns over security of the property, especially with prevalent homeless individuals in the area. He supported this project, but there are details to be worked out, and the City needs to be proactive in preventing any possible problems through project design.

QUACKENBUSH noted that they are proactive managers of other properties. They screen their tenants to get the “cream of the crop.” He emphasized that the residents are respectful and grateful for the opportunity to live on the premises so there is little turnover.

SOTTILE sought clarification on the financing. QUACKENBUSH replied that the City is contributing 20% and the land. He noted that this is a very leveraged investment that relies on federal tax credits. It would bring millions of dollars to the City, plus the City will retain real estate ownership and own the project in 55 years, free and clear.

BALES commended the applicant and noted that the development is beautiful and compared it to a big piece of sculpture. The speaker replied that this has been a collaborative effort with a lot of feedback and ideas from the City and the El Cajon Community Development Corporation.

Mr. Richard WHITE, 376 West Park Avenue, El Cajon CA 92020, is about one block away from the subject property. He preferred more senior residences instead of the commercial space [on the ground floor]. He said it would be a beautiful project and will be a great asset to the area.

BALES asked about possible commercial space tenants and if they would serve the residents. QUACKENBUSH replied that there are current challenges; however, they will be able to offer incentives to attract tenants. Also, they thought of possible tenants including a music school and with the proposed “List of Permitted Uses” for the commercial component there are many broad choices available.

SOTTILE likened this project to those in European cities where the commercial buildings are downstairs and residences are upstairs. He also compared it to the Little Italy development in San Diego.

QUACKENBUSH added that this would become a good investment over time.

Mr. Neil McCARTY, 2075 Dryden Road, El Cajon CA 92020, who owns property on Chambers Street, returned to the podium. He noted that the traffic study does not provide adequate details. He said that past projects do not usually receive negative words from developers. He also emphasized that the senior residents will be low-income and have less money to spend in the community, unlike the yuppies in Little Italy.

He said that after 55 years, the City will own a building that will be “all used up.” He questioned what public benefit would result from the project. Even though seniors will have a place to live, the developers will make a boat-load of money.

QUACKENBUSH noted that the project will generate income to the City and reemphasized that the City will own the building free and clear in 55 years. This will benefit the neighborhood and community, creating a domino effect of investment.

AYRES added that the Redevelopment Agency's obligation is to set aside 20% of the Agency's tax increment to create safe, decent, affordable living for low and moderate income residents, including senior citizens, a population that is demographically increasing as "baby boomers" age.

Motion was made by AMBROSE, seconded by BALES, to close the public hearing; carried 4-0 (CIRCO – absent).

SOTTILE agreed with AYRES about the baby boomers and noted that there is a need for the project. BALES added that the project will benefit El Cajon substantially.

RAMIREZ informed about the procedure for adding the new condition to the proposed resolution. She also mentioned that the draft excerpts of the minutes will accompany the staff report for the City Council public hearing on February 9, 2010 at 7 p.m. She emphasized that this project has come about from substantial conversations between City staff and the applicant. She commended the applicant's open-mindedness to the variety of recommendations that have been suggested.

Motion was made by AMBROSE, seconded by BALES, to amend the proposed Resolution No. 10597 adding condition #5.g. noting: "Carports shall be metal frame with solid roof."; carried 4-0 (CIRCO – absent).

Motion was made by AMBROSE, seconded by MROZ, adopt the amended Resolution No. 10597 reaffirming the Planning Commission action to recommend City Council adoption of the Negative Declaration for this project and recommending City Council approval of Conditional Use Permit No. 2107, subject to conditions; carried 4-0 (CIRCO – absent).

This item is tentatively scheduled for a City Council public hearing on February 9, 2010 at 7 p.m.

[A recess was called at 8:20 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 8:35 p.m.]

ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT NO. 415

This was a public hearing on a City-initiated proposal to amend the Zoning Ordinance to add Section 17.64.253 and Chapter 17.94 regarding water efficient landscaping.

General Plan: All land use designations within the City
Zoning: All zone districts within the City
Project Planner: Eric Craig / 619.441.1782

CRAIG summarized his staff report. He informed that in 2006, the State Legislature passed, and the Governor signed Assembly Bill 1881 which is known as the Water Conservation in Landscaping Act. AB 1881 directed the Department of Water Resources to create a water efficient landscape ordinance for local jurisdictions to adopt. As an alternative, local jurisdictions may adopt their own ordinance, which is the option the City of El Cajon has elected. CRAIG also reviewed the approval process for the Landscape Documentation Package and completion of landscaping and irrigation installation.

MROZ asked if the Department of Water Resources is out of the picture with this ordinance. CRAIG replied affirmatively, but added that anyone can challenge the City's ordinance if they believe it doesn't address the state's mandate. MROZ asked if the City would be proactive in identifying single-family residential properties where existing landscaping over 5,000 sq. ft. must be changed. CRAIG replied negatively.

AMBROSE wanted to make sure that the City does not have to hire a landscape architect to review the project. CRAIG informed that the project planner would inspect the property; however, the applicant's landscape professional will certify compliance. AMBROSE thanked CRAIG for the extensive work in tackling this project.

CRAIG noted that the City's findings must contain an evidentiary record as support and referred Commissioners to "Exhibit D" attached to the proposed resolution. He recommended that the Commission recommend City Council approval of Amendment of Zoning Ordinance No. 415.

SOTTILE opened the public hearing and invited any speakers to address the Commission.

Mr. Carlos LUGO, Director of Engineering and **Mr. Jeff BARNES**, Water Conservation Specialist for Helix Water District, 7811 University Avenue, La Mesa, CA 91941, jointly approached the podium. They noted that, despite the recent heavy rains, drought conditions still remain in the state. They agreed with CRAIG and noted that the State ordinance is difficult to apply. They also commended the active participation of City staff members CRAIG and Mike MILLS (Public Works / Parks) in various Helix Water District's Regional Work Group meetings on water conservation.

BARNES informed of the district's ongoing efforts to educating the public and schools about water conservation.

In reply to SOTTILE's question about gardens, BARNES mentioned the benefits of hydro-zoning and drought-tolerant landscaping to maximize water usage.

BALES informed that the Planning Division recently had a seminar featuring a drought-tolerant landscape expert who provided education and some excellent ideas of plant types that minimize water consumption.

Motion was made by MROZ, seconded by BALES, to close the public hearing; carried 4-0 (CIRCO – absent).

SOTTILE commended staff on work on the ordinance and believes staff's proposal is better than the state's ordinance.

Motion was made by MROZ, seconded by BALES, to adopt the proposed Resolution No. 10598 recommending City Council approval of Zoning Ordinance text amendments to establish regulations pertaining to water efficient landscaping in the City as contained therein; carried 4-0 (CIRCO – absent).

This item is tentatively scheduled for a City Council public hearing on February 23, 2010 at 7 p.m.

SPECIFIC PLAN NO. 518 & TENTATIVE PARCEL MAP NO. 644

This was a public hearing on a request to subdivide an existing lot into two lots and to create a panhandle lot for access to one of the lots. The subject property is located on the south side of Granite Hills Drive between South Second and Dorothy Streets, and is addressed 1203 Granite Hills Drive.

APN:	514-014-07
General Plan:	Low Density Residential (LR)
Zoning:	Residential One-Family (R-1-6)
Applicant:	Dennis Tuttle / 619.465.4321
Project Planner:	Noah Alvey / 619.441.1773

RAMIREZ summarized the staff report and noted that staff recommended that the Planning Commission recommend City Council approval of Specific Plan No. 518 and Tentative Parcel Map No. 644.

SOTTILE opened the public hearing and invited any speakers to address the Commission.

Mr. Earl PENNY, 306 West Douglas Avenue, El Cajon CA, is the engineer for the applicant. He agreed with all conditions of approval.

No other speakers approached the podium.

Motion was made by MROZ, seconded by BALES, to close the public hearing; carried 4-0 (CIRCO – absent).

Motion was made by MROZ, seconded by BALES, to adopt the proposed Resolution No. 10599 recommending City Council approval of Specific Plan No. 518, subject to conditions; carried 4-0 (CIRCO – absent).

Motion was made by MROZ, seconded by BALES, to adopt the proposed Resolution No. 10600, recommending City Council approval of Tentative Parcel Map No. 644, subject to conditions; carried 4-0 (CIRCO – absent).

These items are tentatively scheduled for a City Council public hearing on February 23, 2010 at 7 p.m.

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 2122

This was a public hearing on a request to legitimize an existing tobacco and smoke shop per El Cajon Municipal Code Section 17.88. The subject property is located on the southeast corner of Broadway and North Second Street, and is addressed 1307 Broadway.

APN:	484-261-60
General Plan:	Low Density Residential (LR)
Zoning:	Residential One-Family (R-1-6)
Applicant:	Dennis Tuttle / 619.465.4321
Project Planner:	Noah Alvey / 619.441.1773

RAMIREZ summarized the staff report.

MROZ noted that past staff reports on smoke shops also included photos and comments from the inspections. He asked if staff inspected the smoke shop. [Applicant replied from audience – undecipherable.] RAMIREZ replied that city staff has completed inspections and found that the applicant was in compliance with City ordinance requirements.

SOTTILE opened the public hearing, and invited any speakers to the podium.

Mr. Steve TOOMA, 993 South Mollison Avenue, El Cajon, CA, is the applicant. He mentioned that five inspections were completed at his site and they found that everything was up to code. He has lived in El Cajon for several years and wants to continue doing business to support the City and taxpayers.

BALES thanked him for being in compliance.

Motion was made by BALES, seconded by AMBROSE, to close the public hearing; carried 4-0 (CIRCO – absent).

Motion was made by BALES, seconded by AMBROSE, to adopt the proposed Resolution No. 10601 granting Conditional use Permit No. 2122, subject to conditions; carried 4-0 (CIRCO – absent).

The appeal for this item ends at 5 p.m., Monday, February 8, 2010.

OTHER ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION:

There were none.

STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

There were none.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS/COMMENTS

AMBROSE mused about a recent news article that mentioned that City parks use lots of water and contribute substantial amounts of carbon dioxide gases to the environment. He joked that pretty soon all the parks would be paved with concrete.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by MROZ, seconded by AMBROSE, to adjourn the meeting of the El Cajon City Planning Commission at 9:25 p.m. this 25th day of January, 2010 until February 8, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.; carried 5-0.

Anthony SOTTILE, Chairman

ATTEST:

Melissa AYRES, Secretary