



MINUTES

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

November 7, 2011

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & MOMENT OF SILENCE

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Rob TURNER, Acting City Manager
Melissa AYRES, Director – Community Development
Michael GRIFFITHS, Deputy Director – Public Works
Manjeet RANU, Planning Manager
Tony SHUTE, Senior Planner
Michael REID, Staff Attorney
Ron Luis VALLES, Administrative Secretary

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

CONSENT CALENDAR: Motion was made by AMBROSE, seconded by BALES,
to adopt the minutes of the Planning Commission
meeting of October 24, 2011; carried 5-0.

PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

MROZ then read Agenda Items 2, 3 & 4 as one action item.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2 - DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN, DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STREET DESIGN CROSS SECTIONS

This was a public hearing on a City-initiated proposal to adopt a new Downtown Specific Plan, new Downtown Design Guidelines and street design cross sections establishing comprehensive land use and development standards, as well as detailed design guidelines

and infrastructure plan. This project will govern future development within approximately 541 acres of the downtown generally bounded by I-8 on the West and North, Ballantyne Street and Lincoln Avenue on the East, and Lexington Avenue and Grossmont Avenue on the South. Related CEQA and General Plan discretionary actions will be presented to the Planning Commission under separate reports/agenda items. No final action will occur at this meeting.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3 - DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN ASSOCIATED DISCRETIONARY ACTIONS: GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT, REPEAL OF SP 182, AMEND SP 462 AND REZONING TO M-U (MIXED USE)

This was a public hearing on discretionary actions associated with the proposed Downtown Specific Plan (Agenda Item #2), which include a General Plan Amendment, repealing the existing Specific Plan 182, amending Specific Plan 462 and rezoning the area subject to the proposed Downtown Specific Plan to M-U (Mixed Use). No final action will occur at this meeting.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 - DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT, FINDINGS, STATEMENTS OF OVERRIDING CONSIDERATIONS AND MITIGATION, MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM

This is a public hearing on the Program EIR, Findings, Statements of Overriding Considerations and MMRP in compliance with CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) for all discretionary actions including and associated with the proposed Downtown Specific Plan (Agenda Items #2 and #3). No final action will occur at this meeting.

MROZ opened the public hearing and invited any speakers to the podium.

Mr. Ian GILL, President of Highland Partnership and principal of Silvergate Development approached the podium. He commended staff for their efforts on the project and stressed that in order to create a vibrant urban core it is critical to have sufficient density. The Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC) was able to accomplish this with their updated community plan which generated \$30-40 million per year in additional tax increment as a result of their efforts. He urged the Commissioners to continue in their efforts to move toward approval of the draft Downtown Specific Plan.

CIRCO confirmed with Gill that he lives in San Diego and does enjoy the urban environment.

MROZ asked what the percentage of high-rise condos were in the low to very low income range around the ballpark.

GILL answered the majority of condos around the ball park are at market rate, but several do incorporate affordable housing. He estimated about 10-15% in this category.

Mr. John GIBSON, 1000 Pioneer Way, spoke next. He wanted to bring to the attention of the Planning Commission two additional issues not currently on the list for review. The first was the question as to how high is high enough for buildings in El Cajon. Specifically, the

high-rise building proposal around the trolley station is too high in his opinion. He returned to the podium later to present his second issue.

Mr. Victor MOSSO, 830 Van Horn Road, and owner of MotoWorld, approached the podium next. He appreciated seeing the recommendation to change the height level at the MotoWorld location. He specifically wanted to address Item #34 on the list which proposes the extension of Graves and a new alley through the Motoworld block. He added MotoWorld is a great asset for the City and they do bring in a lot of business from all over the County. He does not see the benefit of the street extension and alley and added that the proposed extension eliminates their building entirely from the plan. He requested this option be removed from the road grid plan.

Mr. John GIBSON returned to advise he believes the Planning Commission has been left out of a lot of major redevelopment project decisions in the past and suggested they be included in the review process of projects going forward.

No other speakers approached the podium.

MROZ suggested moving the review of the issues table to the end of the agenda and continuing on to the Environmental Impact Report agenda item.

In a PowerPoint presentation, SHUTE summarized the staff report.

AMBROSE was concerned with the hydrology in the downtown area and mitigation measures when elevating the buildings and flood proofing them. He wanted to know if any one calculated the cost and if there was a long term fix in place.

TURNER advised the City started a drainage master plan a couple of years ago. The current hydrology standard we use in the City is decades old and the County had recently performed their own hydrology study, which due to the history of increased rainfall, greatly increased the hydrology curves. There is more rainfall in the design in the County standard than in our City standard. To his knowledge, no city has adopted the County standard and the County is considering a review of their plan. The City's consultant, Rick Engineering, will recommend what the City's drainage master plan should be based upon more hydrology studies. TURNER believes after the assessment is complete, we will fall somewhere between the two studies.

AMBROSE stated drainage is a huge issue in the State and asked how we plan to mitigate since our downtown is in a flood prone area. He wanted to know what the long term fix might be.

TURNER referred the Commissioners to his memo which addresses the drainage mitigation being based on preliminary estimates for creating storage areas at key points in the system for water collection. This is a less costly alternative to creating bigger, wider channels; particularly with the associated environmental problems.

AMBROSE believes this to be a major impediment for a developer to plan and develop due to these hydrology issues.

TURNER agreed any development must make allowances for the drainage. The EIR designates where potential flooding areas are located, however, there still are some problem areas. He believes most of the one-foot contour would be eliminated with a more liberal hydrology standard. However, the problem will not completely be eliminated and there should be a storage solution somewhere down the line.

MROZ asked since the new EIR will designate the floodplain areas, what the effect will be on the property owners that were not in the flood areas before who would now be required to carry flood insurance due to a new classification.

TURNER advised that in accordance with FEMA rules, if the study predicts area flooding will be greater than one-foot, then mandatory flood insurance will be required.

MROZ asked when the new data would be available and would it be incorporated into a revised EIR.

GRIFFITHS responded they expected Rick Engineering to have a new schedule available by sometime next spring.

TURNER added that mitigation measures in the EIR are designed with short term and long term solutions to allow development to proceed now and still comply with long term solutions to be identified in the drainage master plan.

AYRES added FEMA does not require mitigation when flooding is less than one foot. Staff intends to request the Council adopt overriding considerations when it approves the plan because we don't want the City to be more restrictive than FEMA.

The Commissioners then proceeded to review the issues table and made preliminary recommendations on Items 27 through 34. See Attachment "A" to these minutes for Planning Commission draft recommendations. The Commission did not make a preliminary recommendation on Item 29. Also, the table reflects the addition of two new issues brought up by GIBSON during the hearing (Items 36 and 37). The Commission agreed to discuss both density and building heights with the City Council at the joint meeting on December 13.

Motion was made by MROZ, seconded by SOTTILE, to close the public hearing; carried 5-0.

In order to meet after the joint Planning Commission and City Council workshop on December 13, it was agreed to continue these items to December 15, depending upon availability of the Council Chambers [confirmed].

OTHER ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 – REGIONAL HOUSING NEEDS ALLOCATION

This was a staff response to the Commission’s request for additional information regarding the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) and report on past production of housing units for the City of El Cajon.

AYRES summarized the RHNA Report and fielded questions from the Commissioners. No action was necessary on this item.

STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

RANU informed the Commissioners that Commissioner Bales’ term would be up next year. and the City Council would consider opening the application period at the November 8 City Council meeting.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS/COMMENTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by SOTTILE, seconded by CIRCO, to adjourn the meeting of the El Cajon Planning Commission at 8:50 p.m. this 7th day of November, 2011 until November 21, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.; carried 5-0.

Paul CIRCO, Vice Chair

ATTEST:

Manjeet RANU, AICP, Secretary