REGULAR MEETING
OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF CULVER CITY,
CALIFORNIA

September 23, 2009
7:00 p.m.

Call to Order & Roll Call

The meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

Present: John Kuechle, Chair
Anthony Pleskow, Commissioner
Linda Smith Frost, Commissioner
Linda Shahinian, Commissioner
Scott Wyant, Commissioner

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Pledge of Allegiance

Heather Baker, Deputy City Attorney led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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Comments for Items NOT on the Agenda

None.

Items are presented in the order considered.

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ACTION ITEMS

Item A-1

Gateway Neighborhood Multi-Family Residential Project Design Guidelines

Staff provided a summary of the material of record noting changes made to the original document.

Commissioners and staff discussed different ways of defining blocks, neighborhoods, and boundaries.

Chair Kuechle invited public participation.

The following members of the audience addressed the Commission:

John Anderson Miller discussed images in the document; felt that front yard fences and gates should be discouraged; and he felt the word sustainability should be included in the document.

Karen Kurakawa pointed out incorrect GIS data; noted that items previously agreed upon by the community were not included; noted the importance of variety; and reported that she had many more issues and felt more thought needed to be given to the document.

Julie Lugo Cerra noted the importance of consistency and adaptability; she provided background on the area; and she suggested defining the development of the tracts and providing buffer zones to neighborhood areas.

Catherine Yanda felt it was important to capture neighborhood character; supported buffer zones; discussed pedestrian patterns of the neighborhood; and she suggested making a note of any lots up for development with an intended footprint included if known.

Eleanor Osgood discussed boundaries of the Gateway neighborhood and conflicts between the General Plan and the code.

Staff responded to speaker comments regarding: corrections to data; ways of defining the neighborhood; and sustainability.

Discussion between staff and the Commission included: sustainability as a City-wide issue rather than a neighborhood issue; defining blocks and neighborhoods; ensuring data is corrected; including more neighborhood images in the document; including information on lots in development and intended uses; support for hearing the rest of Ms. Kurakawa's issues; concern that the guidelines could prevent diversity; implied directives; clarification that guidelines are multi-family; contextual issues; addressing an area susceptible to change; new USGBC and LEED requirements in Los Angeles; addressing sustainability issues as a code amendment; size, massing and lot coverage as more important than design and architecture; including a list of things in the neighborhood worth preserving; discouraging front yard fences and gates; discouraging development of houses that all look alike; double lots; providing a buffer between commercial and residential areas; the accepted demarcation for the Gateway neighborhood; zoning conformity issues; consideration on a block by block basis; concerns with delays in the process; a suggestion to schedule the meeting after feedback on the draft has been considered and more feedback from the public has been obtained; Brown Act issues; adopting a different configuration of blocks; defining the neighborhood using a map vs. language; using the document for other neighborhoods; and determining a measure of comparison.

Karen Kurakawa received clarification that the guidelines did not affect zoning and that because of the zoning, R-2 property is considered multi-family.

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PUBLIC HEARINGS

Item PH-1

11957 Washington Boulevard Site Plan Review and Mitigated Negative Declaration to allow construction of a three-story commercial and retail building with 41,999 sq. ft. of office space; 8,850 sq. ft. of retail space and subterranean parking

Staff provided a summary of the material of record.

Discussion between staff and the Commission included: metered parking in the garage and adequate signage; commercial parking; and parking spaces provided beyond code requirements.

Chair Kuechle invited public participation.

The following members of the audience addressed the Commission:

Kevin Meade, Bastion Development, provided background on the project; discussed parking; pointed out that they were not asking for deviation of the code and were below it on certain issues; reported receipt of letters forwarded by staff; discussed traffic issues and the effect of the project on Atlantic; he referenced an article from the Mar

Vista Community Council Newsletter; and he discussed the massing of the project, permit parking, and balancing the needs of the City, residents and the project itself.

Catherine Yanda suggested educating the public about the construction process in advance and mitigating where possible.

Mike Candlin discussed differences between the eastern and western parts of the City; expressed concern with density and parking; noted existing issues with noise and density; wanted to see a plan for western Culver City; and he felt the project was too large.

Christopher McCann reported writing the article in the Mar Vista Community Council Newsletter; he felt an EIR was warranted because of the impact of the neighborhood; he felt more outreach was necessary; expressed concern with historical elements of the street shape; suggested a smaller footprint on the lot; discussed the mitigation to widen Inglewood; and he submitted aerial photos.

John Miller discussed the history of his property located adjacent to the development; noted that the current plan would eliminate one of the access points to his property; he expressed concern with the possibility of encroachment on his property; and he questioned what the current plans were.

Sol Blumenfeld, Redevelopment Director, agreed to investigate the matter and provide further information to Mr. Miller noting that there would be a required dedication for any redevelopment of the property.

Cary Anderson felt the developer should pay for the parking study, the signage, and for the annual fees for the preferential parking districts in perpetuity; he expressed concern with construction parking; and he asserted that parking districts were not enforced.

Yvonne Hunt, Administrative Secretary, read a written comment from:

Kevin Lachoff

Chair Kuechle read email received by the Commission from:

Cecily Young
Michael Scheffi
Steve M.
Diana Young
Vin D'Onofrio
Steve Wallace
Richard L.

Kevin Meade, Bastion Development, responded to speaker and written concerns and discussed: conditions of development; parking during construction; noise issues; LEED certification; and landscaping conditions.

Barry Kurtz, City Traffic Engineer, addressed traffic issues including: the amount of traffic generated by the project; changes to the signal at McLaughlin and Washington; projected changes to traffic flow in the area; and bypass traffic.

Discussion between staff and the Commission included: proposed traffic control measures; existing traffic issues; discretionary signage changes; neighborhood involvement in proposed traffic changes; proposed changes to East Boulevard; the Neighborhood Management Traffic Program (NMTP); City imposed requirements that the developer eliminate illegal turns onto Marcasel; difficulties with cross jurisdictional coordination of the NMTP with Los Angeles; numerous mitigation measures; clarification that an EIR was not warranted based on initial studies; noise issues; and managing construction and construction conditions.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER SHAHINIAN, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER PLESKOW, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING.

Discussion between the Commission, staff, the developer, and the architect included: hours of operation; parking fees; circulation issues and different configurations for the entryway; energizing the streetscape; the street-level experience; incorporating the lobby; the contiguous retail edge; full floor users vs. multi-tenant corridors; parking requirements for restaurant use vs. retail use; outdoor dining; the status of widening Inglewood; project boundaries; improvements to the West Washington corridor and revitalization of the area; community outreach; compatibility with surrounding buildings and the neighborhood; participation in the maintenance district; extra metered parking; the LEED certification process and requirements; integrating the project into the community; aesthetics; juxtaposition of materials; expressing the use of the building; sidewalk embellishment; outdoor dining; the encroachment permit; and art fund compliance.

Further discussion ensued between the Commission and staff regarding: the General Plan use objective; the existing need to improve the intersection; the response of neighborhood groups; effects of changing the traffic configuration; a suggestion to soften the view from the sidewalk; similar architecture in the area; City compensation for loss of public parking places; overflow parking; a condition to address complaints; CEQA issues; addressing parking during construction; the City Council Sustainable Subcommittee; condition 39; and a condition to require the developer to participate in the process to alleviate future traffic problems caused by the project.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER SHAHINIAN, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SMITH FROST, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO ADOPT THE MITIGATED NEGATIVE MITIGATION.

Staff distributed revisions to the conditions of approval and the resolution to the Commissioners.

~~Discussion between staff and the Commission included:~~ clarification as to which changes requested by Commissioner Shahinian had been implemented; the materials sample board; minor changes and corrections to wording; proposed hours of operation; unusual uses; the business license; the Temporary Certificate of Occupancy; the United States Green Building Council; the area beautification plan; bike racks and shower requirements; condition 81; drop offs and the width of Marcasel; vertical clearance and whether to allow balconies; the street vacation request; maintenance of the decorative sidewalk; landscaping; dedicated parking spaces; wording regarding electricity from power poles vs. from generators; softening the view of the building from the sidewalk; widening a portion of Inglewood Boulevard; the Hayden Place Project provision regarding overflow parking and further traffic mitigations; and clarification regarding green screens.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER WYANT, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SHAHINIAN, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 2009-P004 AS AMENDED.

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Consent Calendar

Item C-1

Secretary's Report

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER SMITH FROST, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER PLESKOW, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION RECEIVE AND FILE THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY REGARDING POSTING OF THE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING.

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Item C-2

Meeting Minutes

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER PLESKOW, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SMITH FROST, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO APPROVE THE MEETING MINUTES OF JULY 8, 2009.

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Items from Staff

Chair Kuechle suggested rescheduling the Community Outreach Guidelines for another time when Gateway Neighborhood representatives were present.

Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager, reported on upcoming Planning Commission items.

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Items from Commissioners

None.

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Adjournment

There being no further business, at 11:39 p.m. the Culver City Planning Commission adjourned to the next regular meeting on Wednesday, October 14, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. in the Mike Balkman Council Chambers.

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John Kuechle, Chair
City of Culver City
Planning Commission

Yvonne D. Hunt
Administrative Secretary