

REGULAR MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMISSION
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

August 26, 2015
7:00 p.m.

Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Lachoff called the meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 7:08 p.m.

Present: Kevin Lachoff, Chair
David VonCannon, Vice Chair
Ed Ogosta, Commissioner
Dana Amy Sayles, Commissioner
Scott Wyant, Commissioner

o0o

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Thomas Gorham.

o0o

Comments for Items NOT on the Agenda

Chair Lachoff invited public input.

No cards were received and no speakers came forward.

o0o

Action Items

Item A-1

(1) Discussion of the Subject of Large Single Family Developments ("Mansionization") in the City and (2) Direction to the Staff on Potential Regulatory Measures

Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director, introduced the item and provided a summary of the material of record.

Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager, summarized recommended changes from the staff report.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding Floor Area Ratios (FARs) vs. lot coverage; the number of R3 zoned areas in the City; courtesy notifications; required notifications; policies; non-conforming properties; the five-foot provision; minimizing the impact on existing properties; alley loaded properties; rear yard setbacks; detached garages and accessory structures; survey requirements; legal non-conforming situations; new constructions and conforming additions; defining detached accessory structures; notification issues with consideration of R-2 and R-3 zoning; and the time frame for potential code changes.

Chair Lachoff invited public comment.

The following members of the audience addressed the Commission:

Michael Camden expressed concern with mansionization; oversized apartments, condos and retail; renting out accessory units; changing villages into concrete canyons; he cited specific locations where smaller structures were replaced by much larger developments; he expressed concern with effects to traffic beyond the immediate area; water usage; smog; and he wanted to see a moratorium on overdevelopment.

Chair Lachoff explained procedures for public speaking.

Timothy Lowe indicated that the issue of mansionization was more complex than staff or the Commission would admit; he discussed the pressure to expand due to the desirability of the community; he felt that the solution should not be a Band-Aid; asserted that a thorough effort is needed with outside independent assistance and careful review of peer communities; he felt an advisory committee of residents should be involved; he urged rejection of the staff proposal and enactment of a moratorium; suggested that if a proposed FAR is greater than 50% there should be a hearing process with approval required by the Planning Commission and City Council; and that while the study process is underway, neighbors and other affected parties should have input into the process.

Sarah Hartley expressed support for comments made Timothy Lowe; she expressed support for the redevelopment of the downtown area and value added to the City; felt that the residential areas should have the same thoughtful development; she felt that a zoning code change was necessary but would take a long time; she felt that a moratorium was imperative; she wanted to see unbiased, outside consultants; she discussed FAR limits; actions in Beverly Hills; and the experiences of the City of Arcadia.

Greg Cahill appreciated the response of Planning staff to resident concerns; he felt it was unreasonable to place the task of reviewing the code on Planning staff; and that it would be illuminating for applications for permits to be made public on a weekly basis, including information on lot and house size.

Iain Gulin appreciated the actions of the Planning Department; he felt that the redlined changes were made in haste and did not reflect a proper investigation; discussed quantitative adjustments; felt that an outside, impartial consultant or committee was necessary to move forward; he discussed justifiable, underlying assumptions; the need for updated permit statistics and locations; he requested weekly reports of permit requests; he expressed concern with a lack of transparency; discussed the pervasive nature of the issue; he recognized that some Commissioners were involved with the real estate community; and he suggested anyone impacted recuse themselves and disclose their potential conflict of interest.

Stefan Eriksson discussed properties affected by mansionization; adjacent neighbors; impacts to air and light; the City Charter; property values; potential lawsuits against the City; the law regarding conflicts of interest; and he encouraged disclosure and recusal.

Philip Lelyveld provided a slide presentation; discussed Commissioner VonCannon's comments at the previous meeting regarding taking the interests of the entire City into account; he reported visiting R-1 zones in the City; observed that Carlson Park, Veterans and Lindbergh Park are more heavily impacted than other areas of the City; he discussed the permissive building code; changes made to neighborhoods by individual property owners; rebuilds within the last two years; new construction taking advantage of loopholes in the code; discomfort of Commissioners with dictating what people can do; the function of the code to protect neighboring properties; the need for a comprehensive discussion of a neighborhood plan for

the future; he expressed support for a proposal suggested at the last meeting for an 18 month process involving a comprehensive discussion of a Culver City Neighborhood Plan for the future; and he suggested a temporary tax to fund the effort.

David Boyd indicated that he is an architect; discussed the experiences of other cities with mansionization; the importance of FAR in all cities; bonus densities; facade modulation; successful cities; what people want in new homes; he felt that limiting homes to 2,700 sq. ft. would be downzoning for the City; and he suggested looking at a .65 FAR.

Ross Hawkins discussed his experience with development by his neighbors; actions of Mr. Gorham; issues with privacy; the assertion that the building is a storage facility; and he wanted to see the second story window that looks into his backyard blocked off.

Burt Bochner felt it was important to spend the money to fund an independent review of zoning laws and he discussed his experience with mansionization and loss of privacy.

Victoria Manley discussed the mansionization next door to her home; loss of light; the four-foot rule; she wanted to see a moratorium; she supported an FAR of .55; expressed concern with proposed basements; bonus incentives; she supported 15-foot rear setbacks; discussed facade modulation; expressed support for the letter from Michael Euen; and she discussed rain mitigation.

Murray Earhart discussed a two-story home built next door to his with three families living in it; the 6-7 automobiles and trucks that belong to the property; and impacts to parking.

Peter Capone Newton indicated that he is an urban planner; found the proposal alarming; felt that it was a down zoning proposal; he felt that size issues could be addressed in ways that do not decrease the development potential of the lot; noted that parking drives a lot of development; discussed the need for progressive proposals; noted that third stories were an option without a basement; discussed habitable space; he reported building an 1,800 square foot house in back of a 1,000 house; discussed effects to property values; tax revenue for the City; he encouraged a significant process to come up with reasonable approaches; and he objected to a moratorium.

Jennifer Chin opposed a lowered FAR and a proposed moratorium in relation to R-2 zoning; discussed notification; she reported moving to the area for zoning; she wanted to create two homes on an R-2 lot to house 4 generations of her family; discussed her plan to increase her home size in phases; the community feel in Culver City; and walkability, parks, and spontaneous urban interaction.

Rita Griffin discussed her experiences with over development by a neighbor; fines imposed; the welding business run out of her neighbor's home; noise issues; parking issues; issues with restrictions to cab companies in the City; and issues with a neighbor's tree.

Jamie Wallace questioned how legal non-conforming status affects property sales, property values and remodeling; changes to rear and side setbacks; garages built on the property lines; bonus rooms; what percentage of homes would be legal non-conforming; the definition of a complete tear-down; whether the lower FAR in Beverly Hills is a result of their larger lot sizes; and concern with impacts to land stability of adjoining properties with the building of basements.

Ariel Manoit discussed a letter from Sammy Romo and he expressed concern with the removal of a palm tree across the street from his home.

Roger Frisch observed that most people were talking about the Carlson Park area and noted that mansionization was creeping into the Veterans Park area too; he discussed a property near his home recently bought by a speculator; the prevailing feel of the neighborhood; proximity to adjacent houses; solar panels; affects to air, light and privacy; he expressed support for the 55% limit; and he felt it important to consider how the new houses fit in with the existing neighborhood.

Rich Waters expressed concern with sustainability; greenery; urban wildlife; privacy; the number of people that park in their garages; consideration of parking restrictions; the Gateway development; he wanted to see R-2 considered in the mansionization discussion; and he offered contact information if Commissioners or staff were interested in getting a copy of information on Keeping the Character of the Neighborhood.

Ron Smore indicated that he agreed with many who spoke before him regarding concerns with mansionization; he felt that having an outside body review the matter would protect the City from

lawsuits; he saw serious issues with regard to speculation; discussed whether it is fair to impose restrictions; he felt it imperative to impose a moratorium in the interim; and he felt it would take a significant amount of time to review the matter properly.

Troy Jackson expressed opposition to the down-zoning of the City; he noted that garages attached to the primary structure were to be included in the FAR; he felt that the process would take a long time; he noted that many neighbors would not be able to rebuild if a disaster happened; and he asserted that changing the setbacks would not help much as an additional foot of light and air would not change a lot.

Tony Pleskow discussed economic realities; his experience remodeling his home; adding square footage; impacts of mansionization; quality of life in the City; setbacks; the location of parking; the separation that a garage and driveway allows; impacts of new homes; houses with integrated garages; larger curb cuts; increases to hardscape; decreases to on street parking; and looking toward old solutions.

Jeanine Wisnosky Stehlin expressed opposition to the proposed moratorium; indicated that she had a growing family and wanted to expand her 1939 home; she expressed concern with perceived threats of lawsuits to members of the Commission; she asserted that everyone would be economically impacted by any changes; she wanted to hear from more people who truly understand design processes; and she expressed concern with her ability to rebuild if there were damage to her property.

Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager, read the comments submitted by:

Marla Koosed
John Kuechle

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding suggestions for the use of outside consultants; the proposed General Plan Update; City Council direction; plans to deliver a text Amendment by November; clarification that consultants would be guided by the same requirements for adoption of the code amendment; taking direction from the Commission; meeting objectives; recommendations by the Commission; and purview of the Commission.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding the benefits of owning property in the City; concerns with the recommended FAR; opposition to including the garage in the FAR; concern with unintended consequences; restricting buildings to a smaller second story; support for increased setbacks; addressing non-conforming issues; the pitched roof vs. flat roof; a feeling that multi-family properties should be considered separately; balancing the needs of the community and property rights; protecting the quality of life; transitional housing stock; creating the proper balance; the idea of a moratorium; the need for data rather than anecdotal evidence; the increase in houses sold in Culver City during the first six months of 2015; side-yard setbacks; garages that are separate from the house; support for a FAR; a loose consensus that 3,000 square feet is a mansion; 60% lot coverage; a feeling that non-conforming is not a big deal; basements as a solution to many issues; home theatres; the importance of back yards to some people; the complicated nature of the issue; answering the request of the City Council; design perspectives; consequences of reducing the amount of footage possible to be built on the first floor; reductions to livable square footage; regulations about basement windows; light wells; support for surveys to tear downs; discouraging lot assembly; closing loopholes exploited in other cities; pending developments on adjacent properties; designing for neighbors; balancing the interests of property owners and neighbors; parking; detached vs. attached garages; older housing stock in the City; increasing socialization to the street; the FAR methodology already in place; penalizing owners of larger properties; incentivizing people to keep the driveway that becomes a buffer between the houses; considering the attached garage as part of the mass; the 75% second floor square footage; the total home size; gray areas of architecture and architectural styles; concern with the offset second floor; access to the lower level; concern with corner lots and prevailing street frontage setbacks; multi-family guidelines; recommendations regarding lining up bedroom windows with adjoining properties; text amendments for areas with Commission unanimity; preliminary drafting; work with the City Attorney's office; meeting the timeline for completion; the ultimate direction; next steps in the process; items to introduce that are not on the list; having Commissioners confirm issues and where they stand upon them; ensuring that direction is clear to staff; recapping feelings on each bullet item; scheduling another meeting to consider summaries; transparency; public notice; staff agreed to provide information weekly to the Commission and to the public on new developments; mapping the data; historical data; concern with

an artificial rush when there is a potential change to the code; whether FAR can be included; the data for what is permitted or applied for in the permitting system; clarification that FAR is not currently tracked; and agreement to provide information from the June 6, 2015 City Council meeting to the present.

o0o

Consent Calendar

Item C-1

Meeting Minutes

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER SAYLES, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER WYANT AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVE MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR MEETING OF JULY 22, 2015.

o0o

Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

Chair Lachoff invited public comment.

No cards were received and no speakers came forward.

o0o

Items from Staff

Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager, provided an update on upcoming meetings, notification and agenda items.

Chair Lachoff requested that notification and consideration not be extended to R-2 and R-3 parcels.

o0o

Items from Planning Commissioners

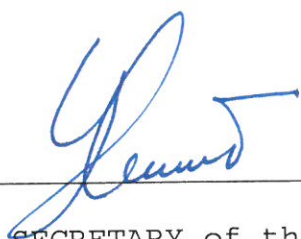
Commissioners discussed scheduling and their availability for upcoming meetings.

o0o

Adjournment

There being no further business, at 9:50 p.m., the Culver City Planning Commission adjourned to the next regular meeting on Wednesday, September 16, 2015, at 7:00 p.m.

o0o



YVONNE D. HUNT
SECRETARY of the CULVER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

APPROVED _____



KEVIN LACHOFF
CHAIR of the CULVER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
Culver City, California

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that, on the date below written, these minutes were filed in the Office of the City Clerk, Culver City, California and constitute the Official Minutes of said meeting.



Martin R. Cole
CITY CLERK

24 NOV 2015

Date