

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

February 25, 2009
7:00 p.m.

Call to Order & Roll Call

The meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order
at 7:06 p.m.

Present: David Rockwell, Chair
John Kuechle, Vice Chair
Anthony Pleskow, Commissioner

Absent: Linda Smith Frost, Commissioner (excused)

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Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance

Karen Kurakowa led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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Comments NOT on the Agenda

Julie Lugo Cerra spoke of the importance of a buffer
between commercial and industrial areas; she provided a
brief history of the City and its unique zoning; noted the
importance of consistency for tracking purposes; encouraged
residents to work together to save their neighborhoods; and
cited issues connected with several streets being left out
of the Gateway neighborhood.

Vice Chair Kuechle suggested that Ms. Lugo Cerra track the
zoning so that it would remain impartial.

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Discussion Items

Item D-1

Discussion of Study Regarding Multi-Family Neighborhood
Design Compatibility Issues and Multi-Family Design
Guidelines - Phase Two

With the aid of slides, staff provided a summary of the material of record.

Sol Blumenfeld, Redevelopment Director, reported that staff was looking for consistency between the survey and input from the neighborhood, and was working to develop guidelines based on observations. He added that they did not want to devise recommendations that made it infeasible to develop in the City.

Discussion between staff and the Commission included: compliments to staff on their hard work; differences in the staff presentation and the staff report; concern with becoming the architecture police; and design consequences of subterranean parking.

Chair Rockwell invited public participation.

The following members of the audience addressed the Commission:

An unidentified woman spoke about visit-ability and wanted staff to encourage certain concepts to developers including the cradle to cradle concept and accessibility.

Linda Shahinian questioned what weight the guidelines would have.

Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director, explained that the Commission had discretion and the document would provide a good database to evaluate a project.

Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager, clarified that the findings would help staff make their recommendations, provide for early community input, and the Commission would not look favorably on a project that is not attempting to meet guidelines.

Heather Baker, Assistant City Attorney, recommended against using words like prohibit and require in guidelines for design noting that the guidelines provided a good guide for the Commission in evaluating projects for compatibility but they are not regulations.

Linda Shahinian expressed concern with mansionization; she wanted to see consistency of footprint, mass and scale; and she felt the guidelines could be applied to single-family

homes as well.

An unidentified man discussed statistics for average setbacks and average heights and suggested that besides looking at the median of the lots, the top and bottom ranges should be considered. He suggested creating guidelines to ensure that the percentage of footprint was compatible with buildings surrounding the new project to ensure similar massing and scale throughout the neighborhood and he noted while that the focus was on two unit lots, he wanted to see attention given to single lots as he felt that was going to become an issue.

A speaker named John noted the importance of being in harmony with the best of the neighborhood and improving on it. He suggested: developing guidelines that indicate elements of specific styles and encourage preferable elements; providing cheat sheets to improve certain types of developments; and he distributed an assessment of the neighborhood.

Karen Kurakowa discussed: creating a qualitative analysis of the Gateway Streets; concern that the overall quality of the neighborhood experience and the streetscape was in danger of being erased; the importance of street trees, medians, and setbacks rather than the color of the house; the importance of the proportion of built to unbuilt; parking issues; requirements with regard to the width of driveways; and she noted the difficulty of balancing the value of enough parking without encouraging too much parking so people don't get out of their cars and onto public transportation. She explained that she didn't want strict rules. Her preference is to protect the "macro" sense of the neighborhood, not the minute details. She also noted that parking is very difficult.

Rich Waters discussed: subterranean parking; canopy trees; landscaping specifications; the lack of a City requirement that trees be planted to break up the massiveness of buildings; xeriscaping and natural environments; the importance of integration of the entire plan; ensuring that landscaping is not an afterthought; the critical importance of mass and setback; and concerns with density and its effect on infrastructure including traffic and parking issues.

Eleanor Osgood discussed: shading issues; view obstruction;

protecting wildlife and natural habitat; and the importance of greenscape as open space is reduced.

Karim Salley, Downtown Neighborhood Association, spoke regarding neighborhood consulting; green requirements; and encouraging the developer to use local contractors.

Karen Kurakowa discussed natural boundaries and zoning and explained the nature of the Gateway Neighborhood Association noting that it would be impossible for them to become official, recognizable and a 501c3.

Rich Waters spoke of the Los Angeles policy of having Neighborhood Councils which draw their own boundaries and he supported allowing Culver City neighborhoods to define their own boundaries.

An unidentified woman suggested that the developer accommodate adjacent, non-conforming conditions.

Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager, noted language in the code to address non-conforming situations.

Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director, clarified that it would be difficult to require a developer to address an adjacent, non-conforming setback but it could be requested.

Commissioner Pleskow did not think the Commission could deny approval based on that.

Rich Waters suggested that integration was key as projects should be integrated into the neighborhood.

Discussion between staff and the Commission included: clarification that concerns cited were more about the nature of the proportionality and mass of the building than style; elements of good buildings; the Moda building on Washington Boulevard; imposing aesthetic conditions; the importance of neighborhood groups; support for including different averages in the chart; prioritizing points; focus; concern with trying to include green requirements in the design guidelines; support for having the document deal with how the building impacts the neighbors rather than building issues; landscaping plans; clarification that there are no alleys in the Gateway area; windows and doors; focusing on single family residence adjacency rather than

zone adjacency; patio covers; unanticipated consequences; a suggestion to get input from developers; plans to study parking issues and cost implications; abutting buildings vs. the neighborhood and vicinity; specific distances; balance; the likelihood of developments following the guidelines; legal issues; financial implications; and next steps in the process.

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Consent Calendar

Item C-1

Secretary's Report

MOVED BY VICE CHAIR KUECHLE, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER PLESKOW, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED (ABSENT COMMISSIONER SMITH FROST) THAT THE 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

The Commission agreed to hold the minutes to the next meeting when Commissioner Smith Frost could be present.

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Items from Staff

Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager, noted that the next Commission meeting would be March 25 with the Guidelines on the agenda for consideration.

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Items from Commissioners:

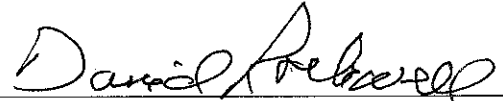
None.

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Adjournment

There being no further business, at 9:42 p.m., the Culver City Planning Commission adjourned to the next regular meeting on Wednesday, March 25, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. in the Mike Balkman Council Chambers.

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David Rockwell, Chair
City of Culver City
Planning Commission


Yvonne D. Hunt
Administrative Secretary