REGULAR MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMISSION
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

June 8, 2016
7:00 p.m.

Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Lachoff called the meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 7:04 p.m.

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

*Commissioner Wyant left the meeting at 8:43 p.m.

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Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Thomas Gorham.

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Comments for Items NOT on the Agenda

Chair Lachoff invited public input.

No cards were received and no speakers came forward.

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Consent Calendar

Item C-1

Meeting Minutes

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER SAYLES, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER OGOSTA AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVE MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF MARCH 23, 2016.

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Public Hearings

Item PH-1

Administrative Site Plan Review, P2016-0041-ASPR, and Tentative Tract Map No. 74021, P2016-0041-TTM, for the Construction and Creation of a Five Unit Condominium Subdivision at 3961 Tilden Avenue in the Residential Medium Density Multiple Family (RMD) Zone

Vice Chair Voncannon recused himself from the item due to the proximity of his residence to the project and he exited the dais.

Gabriela Silva, Associate Planner, provided a summary of the material of record.

Commissioner Sayles received clarification on the requirement in Condition #16 that the half-width of Tilden be reground and reconstructed.

Ramsey Hahn and Philip Knight, Applicants, provided a presentation on the project.

Discussion ensued between staff, the Applicants and Commissioners regarding sustainable features of the project; Culver City Green Building Standards; the trash area; parking restrictions and signage; Sanitation Department approval; alternatives; access control for the garage; and the unique architecture.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER SAYLES AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER OGOSTA THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION OPEN THE PUBLIC HEARING.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: LACHOFF, OGOSTA, SAYLES, WYANT
NOES: NONE
RECUSED: VONCANNON

Chair Lachoff invited public comment.

No cards were received and no speakers came forward.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER SAYLES AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER WYANT THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: LACHOFF, OGOSTA, SAYLES, WYANT
NOES: NONE
RECUSED: VONCANNON

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding support for the design of the project; the transitional nature of the area; and appreciation that the applicant abided by the requirements and added to the neighborhood.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER OGOSTA AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SAYLES THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION: APPROVE ADMINISTRATIVE SITE PLAN REVIEW, P2016-0041-ASPR, AND TENTATIVE TRACT MAP NO. 74021, P2016-0041-TTM, FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND CREATION OF A FIVE (5) UNIT RESIDENTIAL CONDOMINIUM LOCATED AT 3961 TILDEN AVENUE IN THE RESIDENTIAL MEDIUM DENSITY MULTIPLE FAMILY (RMD) ZONE WITH THE RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: LACHOFF, OGOSTA, SAYLES, WYANT
NOES: NONE
RECUSED: VONCANNON

Vice Chair Voncannon returned to the dais.

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Item PH-2

Proposed Comprehensive Plan (CP) - P2015054; Zoning Code Map Amendment (ZCMA) - P2015055; General Plan Map Amendment (GPMA) - P2015056; and Tentative Tract Map (TTM) - P2015057; to subdivide an existing 4.35 acre site located at 3814 Lenawee Avenue into 10 new land lots for the development of a 90 unit/110 bed senior citizen residential care facility for assisted living and memory care, 8 new single family homes and the retention of 1 existing single family home

Jose Mendivil, Associate Planner, provided a summary of the material of record.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding the proposed three-way stop; changing agricultural farmland to a non-agricultural use; clarification that the zoning is R-1; traffic flow for the assisted living facility; proximity of the development to the fault line; mitigation of seismic issues; state requirements; and the footnote regarding home sizes.

MOVED BY VICE CHAIR VONCANNON, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER OGOSTA AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION OPEN THE PUBLIC HEARING.

Chair Lachoff invited public comment.

The following members of the audience addressed the Commission:

Robert Schultz, Applicant, provided background on the project and thanked Planning department staff.

David Boyd, Applicant, summarized the project; discussed site constraints; the site analysis; buffer zones; parking areas; the deceleration lane; the assisted living area; the residential concept; buffers; and the assisted living facility.

David Simon discussed the assisted living facility; their duty to serve their residents, employees and owners; the Vibrant Life program; electronic benefits; community involvement; the market; and he clarified that they were a non-medical model.

David Boyd, Applicant, discussed the single family homes; floor plans; and the materials palette.

Jim Davis provided background on himself; expressed concern with the three-story senior housing; and he requested that Blair Hills residents be given first priority as far as moving in.

Matt Cyr expressed concern with the construction period; the number of units; potential for ambulance noise; and the inability of residents to affect the process.

Eleanor Osgood asserted that the project was missing the opportunity to tie in with the surrounding recreational areas, nature and the community; expressed concern with the institutional looking, massive, assisted living facility; she questioned how many trees would be removed from the lot; and she hoped that existing trees would be preserved.

Yvonne Hunt, Administrative Secretary, read comments into the record submitted by:

Stephen Galanis
Christian
Richard Fressz

MOVED BY VICE CHAIR VONCANNON, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER OGOSTA AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING.

Discussion ensued between the staff, Commissioners and project representatives regarding the dining program at the assisted living facility; deliveries; staggered employee shifts; noise associated with first responders; the licensed nurse on staff; the demolition plan; which trees are staying and which are being removed; reasons for tree removal; replacement trees; buildings to be demolished; the street extension; the need to raise the grade for the parking area; sound mitigation on the windows; the acoustical consultant; whether to add triple glazing as a condition of approval; building requirements; the discretionary permit; Public Works conditions requiring street trees; the institutional look of the building; changing the colors of the building; adding depth to the third floor; breaking up the height; alternative uses; low impact to the neighborhood; economic activity; appreciation for the thoroughness of the comments from the Community meeting and the minutes from the Homeowners Association; construction phasing; traffic; appreciation for the variety amongst the single family homes; mixing of generations; the opportunity for social interaction; consideration of different ways of providing assisted living; breaking up buildings into more of a neighborhood feel; integrating a project like this into the City; making a project more walkable; the fault line; aesthetics; noise levels; the need for the proposed type of housing; appreciation for the use of the land; more building articulation on the assisted living facility; encouragement for triple paned windows at the behest of the acoustical engineer; character of the single family houses; and next steps in the process.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER WYANT, SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR VONCANNON AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION:

1. ADOPT A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION (MND) AND MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM (MMRP) BASED ON THE INITIAL STUDY FINDING THAT THE PROJECT, WITH MITIGATION MEASURES INCORPORATED, WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT (ATTACHMENT NO. 2); AND

2. RECOMMEND TO THE CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (CP) - P2015054; PLANNED DEVELOPMENT (PD 14) ZONING CODE MAP AMENDMENT (ZCMA) - P2015055; GENERAL PLAN MAP AMENDMENT (GPMA) - 2015056; AND TENTATIVE TRACT MAP (TTM) - 2015057; SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL AS STATED IN RESOLUTION NO. 2016-P006 (ATTACHMENT NO. 1).

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Action Item

Item A-1

Conformance Review of Comprehensive Plan Amendment No. 6 for the Culver Studios, to determine whether revised plans for Building Y and the Van Buren Parking Structure provide additional visual enhancements and minimize potential impacts to adjacent residential uses pursuant to Condition No. 106 of Planning Commission Resolution No. 2015-R098

Commissioner Wyant recused himself and exited the meeting.

Chair Lachoff called a brief recess from 8:43 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.

Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager, provided a summary of the material of record.

Chair Lachoff invited public comment.

Jim Suhr, Applicant, extended best wishes to Commissioner Wyant; thanked everyone present at the meeting for coming; discussed the 100th anniversary of the Studio; the relationship with the community; and efforts to resolve resident concerns.

John Bowman, Applicant Representative, discussed the substantial design changes made; noted that the studio predated the neighborhood that surrounds it; discussed the development process; City Council direction for the conformance review; changes to the building core functions; parking garage changes; façade enhancements; headlight spillage; camouflaging; the parking garage; and the linear park.

Chair Lachoff received clarification regarding a letter circulated earlier and was advised that the Commission should follow procedures set forth in the staff report.

Daniel Freedman, Jeffer, Mangels, Butler and Mitchell, and Culver City Residents for Responsible Development, discussed points raised in the letter distributed to Commissioners; traffic issues; existing traffic patterns and counts; the fact that a traffic count was not done; the height limit; measuring methods; code requirements; the level above 56 feet for the parking structure; the building envelope; self-created constraints; the setback of Building Y; why a brand new office building is being given a five-foot setback next to an existing multi-family home; and concerns with impacts to the character of the community.

Neill Brower, Jeffer, Mangels, Butler and Mitchell, discussed meeting the programmatic needs of the Studio while being sensitive to the character of the community; process issues; clarification that the process is mitigation rather than a conformance review; the purpose of the redesign to soften the effects on the community; deferring mitigation in violation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); public comment; providing adequate time for the public to review the staff report; traffic and aesthetics; the recirculation of the MND to reflect the changes; Condition 106; design changes; impact determinations; the 69 foot building five feet away from the property line next to low scale residential development; the large balcony with no stated limitations on use; the massive structure with significantly more intensive use than now exists; privacy issues; the need for significantly greater setbacks and buffering along with limiting the height to the standard 56 feet; significant unavoidable impacts with the current proposal; and the procedurally and substantively inadequate environmental review.

Jan Skorstad appreciated that the bottom two levels would be moved 15 feet back to preserve the trees; asked that a variance be granted to allow for a step back of the sixth level; and suggested parking at a different location with people shuttled to the studio.

Doris Levy supported removal of the upper level of the parking structure or a significant setback; she discussed verbal assurances that the mature conifers in front of the parking structure would be protected and maintained; and she noted that the trees would help ensure that the street remained a viable residential street.

Eleanor Osgood discussed the development of design guidelines; asked that staff and the Commission take the guidelines seriously; she questioned why staff did not say no to the Studio; and she suggested incentives for getting people out of their cars and taking public transit.

Tim Cronin expressed concern with the line-of-sight into his bedroom from Building Y; light spillage and noise issues; and hours of usage of the decks.

Dan Milder expressed concern with line-of-sight issues and noise; he was unclear about air filtering and monitoring of air quality due to truck emissions; he discussed noise from the industrial air filtering; back-up beepers in the middle of the night; adding a requirement to deactivate back up sensors; and he asked for clarification on the pocket park and keeping the wall.

Chair Lachoff explained protocol for ceding time to other speakers.

Albert Medina expressed concern that the parking structure did not fit in and would change the character of the community; questioned why the Studios were being accommodated rather than the neighbors; and he suggested subterranean parking.

Steve Michael discussed the unprecedented scale of the parking structure; expressed surprise that the City Planners failed to take into consideration the disastrous impact that excavation would have had on the trees; discussed his consultation with an arborist; construction remedies to help preserve the trees; creating a ten-year plan to keep the trees healthy; the cutting of the roots; visual mitigation; the mandate for 1400 cars; effects to the community; engineering issues for the setback on the upper level; and he suggested losing the top level.

Farrah Walker expressed surprise that so much parking would be constructed with the proximity to the new Metro; she discussed shuttling employees in; and she shocked that such a huge parking structure would be built in a residential neighborhood.

Jim Suhr, Applicant, discussed balancing competing interests; the unique nature of the Studio; challenges to utilizing tools and policies for alternative transportation; utilization of City parking lots; cumulative development parking pressure; zoning; the Comprehensive Plan; existing buildings on the Studio lot that currently exceed 56 feet; building measurement; concerns with noise and light; the Conformance Review; direction from the Planning Commission and City Council; and the desire to resolve issues.

Discussion ensued between Commissioners and Mr. Suhr regarding sight line concerns; agreement to enlarge the planter area to protect the privacy of neighboring property; the deck; and step back diagrams.

John Bowman, Land Use Counsel to the Culver Studios, discussed legal issues raised by the firm of Jeffer, Mangels, Butler and Mitchell; the adequacy of the MND adopted by the City Council; he noted that those issues were not before the Commission at this meeting; he asserted that there was no legal basis to reopen the CEQA process and that arguments should have been presented to the City Council before a decision was rendered; he discussed a lawsuit filed against the City and Culver Studios by Jeffer Mangels on behalf of an organization founded after the item was approved by the City Council; he asserted that issues would be addressed in due course by the lawsuit; he discussed the Conformance Review under Condition 106; and he clarified that Condition 106 is a Planning Condition.

Heather Baker, Deputy City Attorney, concurred with Mr. Bowman's comments.

Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director discussed the setback for Building Y; the four-foot planter proposed; addressing privacy issues; the garage; adequacy of the MND; proper processes; approvals; the outstanding issue subject to review; clarification that there is no need to recirculate the MND; comments on street trees; subterranean encroachment; preservation of root structure; clarification that guidelines pertain to multi-family developments and are not requirements; the Condition to address the use of the Building Y deck; air filtering, quality and monitoring with respect to the B-1 and B-2 levels; noise issues; staff review of plans; setting back the top floor; the height envelope; the process for height exceptions; van pooling and maximizing the use of Expo; the necessity of a parking garage; and addressing market demand for creative office uses.

Discussion ensued between staff, Commissioners and Mr. Suhr regarding an upper level setback; study of the transition and cross slope; the study already completed by the Studio; the existing depressing of the ground floor to minimize the height; emergency vehicle access; the number of spaces taken up by production trucks; accommodating the code minimum; projections for future parking needs and uses; the previous hearing; size of the current buildings on the site; appreciation for changes made; height of the parking structure; adjacency to the school; purview; the process; camouflaging efforts; appreciation to residents for their input; the arborist report; Building Y mitigations; the garage; the need for transfer beams; the step back; feasible exploration of moving the height down 40 inches; additional work with the Fire Department; alleviating height issues; basement level step backs; architectural options; the need to bring the Studio up to date; investigation of alternatives; the time frame needed to work on the ingress/egress issue; effects to elevation; the eagerness of the applicant to move forward; and a suggestion to confer with the applicant for a few minutes.

Chair Lachoff called a brief recess from 10:17 p.m. to 10:35 p.m.

Sol Blumenfled, Community Development Director, discussed the Commission concern regarding reducing the mass of the building; forfeiture of 43 stalls; and a request to eliminate the first line of parking along Van Buren on the sixth level subject to Fire Department approval of depressing the building up to 20 inches and, if approval is not received, the original plan as presented shall be approved.

Heather Baker, Deputy City Attorney, discussed ways to proceed.

MOVED BY VICE CHAIR VONCANNON AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SAYLES THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION FIND THAT THE REVISED DESIGNS FOR BUILDING Y HAVE SATISFIED PROJECT CONDITION APPROVAL 106 WITH THE ADDITION OF THE PLANTER.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: LACHOFF, OGOSTA, SAYLES, VONCANNON
NOES: NONE
RECUSED: WYANT

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER OGOSTA AND SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR VONCANNON THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION: AGREE THAT THE VAN BUREN PARKING STRUCTURE SATISFIES CONDITION 106 WITH THE ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENT THAT IF CULVER STUDIOS CAN GET FIRE DEPARTMENT APPROVAL FOR LOWERING THE BUILDING THEN THEY WILL BE REQUIRED TO SETBACK THE FIRST LINE OF PARKING ALONG VAN BUREN AT THE SIXTH FLOOR LEVEL.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: LACHOFF, OGOSTA, SAYLES, VONCANNON
NOES: NONE
RECUSED: WYANT

The applicant thanked Steve Michael for the independent arborist's report and agreed to pick up that cost.

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Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

Chair Lachoff invited public comment.

No cards were received and no speakers came forward.

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Receipt of Correspondence

None.

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Items from Staff

Thomas Gorham, Planning Director, discussed upcoming items to be considered by the Planning Commission.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding automated parking currently in place that Commissioners could observe prior to consideration of automated parking items; the reorganization on July 13; availability; and scheduling.

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Items from Planning Commissioners

None.

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Adjournment

There being no further business, at 10:47 p.m., the Culver City Planning Commission adjourned to the next regular meeting on Wednesday, June 22, 2016, at 7:00 p.m.

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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

Date