

CITY OF SAN GABRIEL

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

November 10, 2014

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of San Gabriel was held in the City Council Chambers at City Hall, 425 S. Mission Drive, San Gabriel, California, on Monday, November 10, 2014.

Chairman Garden, Planning Commission Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and led the pledge of allegiance.

**Meeting Called to Order;
Pledge of Allegiance**

ROLL CALL

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Chairman Norman Garden, Vice-Chair Thomas Klawiter, Commissioner Jingbo Lou, Commissioner Camelia Vera, and Commissioner Vincent Zawodny

ABSENT:

None

STAFF PRESENT:

City Attorney Robert L. Kress, Planning Manager Mark Gallatin, Associate Planner Larissa De la Cruz, Assistant Planner Fang-zhou Zhou, and Planning Commission Secretary Jackie Wong

CONSENT ITEMS

Minutes of the Regular Planning Commission Meeting on October 13, 2014.

Chairman Garden moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Lou seconded the motion. There being no objections, the minutes were approved.

CONSENT ITEMS

Minutes of the Regular Planning Commission Meeting on October 13, 2014.

Approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Garden asked that speakers come forward who wish to address the Planning Commission on non-agenda items.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were two people from the audience who spoke on non-agenda items.

The following two people from the audience spoke before the Planning Commission:

1. Debbie Saito, 707 Abbot Ave, San Gabriel, thanked Planning Manager Mark Gallatin for speaking to the community recently about developments in the City. She stated that residents would like to know if they can be involved in the process when developers present their plans and get the community's input. She added that she's trying to understand how the City can be a cohesive City where the community can be involved in setting development parameters. She also stated that instead of accommodating building developments the City should focus on attracting mainstream markets. She shared that when she went to an Asian market to look for cake mixes, she couldn't find any there.

Chairman Garden stated that the Commission cannot fully answer Ms. Saito's questions tonight but suggested if staff could offer a Lunch and Learn opportunity to invite the community to learn about developments and the City's processes.

Planning Manager Gallatin stated that the City has done a better job in being inclusive during the development process. He liked the idea of inviting the community at large for a learning opportunity. He also suggested Ms. Saito subscribe to the Council Weekly for development updates and any future community outreach meetings. He emphasized that it is so important to continue the dialogue with the community and for staff to create new ways of doing that.

2. Brad Cadle, 1140 Bilton, San Gabriel, also thanked Planning Manager Gallatin for his speaking engagement to the community. He expressed concerns about having too many condos and mixed-use developments and the lack of mainstream grocery stores in the City. He stated that he likes San Gabriel to remain a small residential community. He also stated his concerns about the current drought problem and the possibility of having a moratorium on new developments. He inquired what would be the consequences should the drought get to Stage 3 in place for condos or future development approvals.

City Attorney Robert Kress stated that the Commission cannot engage in questions and answers during this portion of the meeting. This is only the part where the public can express their concerns. If speaking in relation to item number one in tonight's agenda, he suggested for Mr. Cadle to state so during that item's public hearing time.

At this point, no one else came forward to speak; therefore, Chairman Garden closed this portion of the meeting.

EXPLANATION OF PUBLIC HEARING PROCEDURES

City Attorney Kress explained the public hearing procedures for the items on this evening's agenda.

Mr. Kress also added that Public Hearing item #1 involves a conflict of interest for Chairman Garden and Commissioner Vera. Chairman Garden lives within a 500 feet radius of the proposed project, and Commissioner Vera is in real estate, and the potential exists that she and/or her colleagues may decide to sell residential units for this property in the future. Therefore, they have been excused from being in the room. Vice-Chair Klawiter chaired this portion of the meeting with Commissioners Lou and Zawodny in attendance.

PUBLIC HEARING ITEM

1. **704-712 W. Las Tunas Drive
Planning Case No.
PL-13-090 (Conditional Use Permit/Tentative Tract Map #72531)
Applicant: LSG Las Tunas, LP
Architect: Adele Chang (Lim Chang Rohling and Associates)
Continued to the
November 10, 2014 Planning Commission Meeting**

This item was continued by the Commission from the regular meeting on September 8, 2014. This report was presented by Associate Planner Larissa De La Cruz regarding a project that will have an extensive renovation to three existing commercial buildings as well as a demolition of one commercial building, which will be replaced with a three story mixed-use development with 4,814 sq ft of commercial space and 37 residential condominium units. The proposed project requires a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to allow the mixed-use and a Tentative Tract Map to consolidate the parcels and subdivide the airspace for the residential condominium units.

This project was reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). A Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) was prepared for this project. A Notice of Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration of Environmental Impact was prepared and filed with the Los Angeles County Clerk on July 3, 2014 and was also made available for public review.

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve PL-13-090, subject to the recommended conditions of approval.

EXPLANATION OF PUBLIC HEARING PROCEDURES

Explained by City Attorney Kress.

PUBLIC HEARING ITEM

1. **704-712 W. Las Tunas Drive
Planning Case No.
PL-13-090 (Conditional Use Permit/Tentative Tract Map #72531)
Applicant: LSG Las Tunas, LP
Architect: Adele Chang (Lim Chang Rohling and Associates)
Approved.**

Ms. De La Cruz stated that in response to the recent community outreach meeting and the Commission's suggestions, the development team made the following changes:

1. The overall height of the building was reduced from 55 feet to 49 feet;
2. The commercial space was reconfigured from a restaurant use to a general commercial use; and
3. The residential units facing Alanmay were replaced by four live-work units. The total residential condo units are now reduced from 37 to 31 units, together with the four live-work units, for a revised total of 35 units.

Vice-Chair Klawiter was concerned about the insufficient amount the developer has to pay towards the sewer fee.

Senior Civil Engineer Algis Marciuska stated that the sewer impact fees are used to implement the City's Capital Improvement projects. The City has plans for the area and will be doing the replacement or repair in the next five years. The City will look at pipes for safety factor. Currently, the pipes are not in overflow condition at this time. They will be looked at again following the completion of the project.

At this time, the applicant, George Lin, 901 S. Garfield Ave., Alhambra, came forward to thank the Commission, staff and residents for their input to have his team come up with a better plan. He gave an overview of the project and its history. The property was purchased two and a half years ago and he envisioned attracting mainstream retailers such as Trader Joe's and such to the area. However, there were many challenges bringing a viable supermarket to this location for many of them do not consider it as a prime location. He stated that he shares the same sentiments and concerns with the residents about noise, congestion and parking issues. He looked at the site as a whole and concluded that a mixed-use development would fit his needs as well as the community's. He emphasized that he will be building a good quality project that will complement the neighborhood to jump start revitalizing the area. He stated that Las Tunas needs a lot of work to become a great street.

Testimonies

1. Ruthie Vadai, 602 W. Las Tunas Drive, San Gabriel, expressed her concern that this project is being forced upon her and the neighbors. She stated that the City doesn't listen to residents who have been living here for over 40 years. She stated that if a decision is made tonight, it is being made without the residents and the businesses in mind. She stated that there is more than a building when you have a business. It is not about how pretty it looks outside but what occurs inside matters. The façade is not what it is all about.
2. Ruth Vadai, 602 W. Las Tunas Drive, San Gabriel, expressed her strong opposition to this project. She stated that the building is too huge and that it will override the historical buildings in the Mission District. She mentioned about the new development that will take place along Mission Drive and Padilla Street, uncertain what it will become. She also stated that parking, noise, and traffic will be horrendous in the area. She stated her concern about the drought problem and asked the Commission to be on the people's side.

Vice-Chair Klawiter stated that all of the Commissioners are San Gabriel residents.

3. Linda Romero, 12 Halstead Circle, Alhambra, property owner of 116-200 Alanmay, San Gabriel, stated that she supports the project. She stated that the Mission District Specific Plan was carefully created to conform to strict and specific guidelines. The developers have diligently followed these guidelines and have been fully involved with its community outreach. She commended how the staff report was well written and have addressed all of the community's issues. She added that the end result will be a great improvement to a blighted property.

Testimonies

4. Debbie Kilgore, 245 S. Arroyo Drive, San Gabriel, expressed her concern about traffic and potential sewer problems. She stated that traffic reports are done mostly on major streets and was concerned about traffic impacts on smaller streets like hers. When people walk at night in the neighborhood, they are faced with traffic in her small neighborhood streets. She stated that the City needs to be conservative and we are a good neighborhood and that we need to be also conservative.
5. Cindy Reimers, 138 N. Franklin, San Gabriel, expressed her support for the project. She suggested that the developers should make an effort to make façade improvements on the corner of Mission and Las Tunas and the building where Tony the tailor is. These corner buildings are detriment to the Mission District gateway. She stated that she is aware that the developer could not purchase these properties but hopes the developer could work something out with these property owners to improve the façade of their existing buildings to complement the look of the new project.
6. Steven Chen, 1134 E. Las Tunas, San Gabriel, expressed his support for the project. He stated that Las Tunas desperately needs to be revitalized. He stated that we've lost national retailers and with this project, he hopes that this will attract them back again or attract new ones.
7. Anna Bataggia, 1140 Bilton Way, San Gabriel, stated that the Mission District Specific Plan has nothing to do with the residents. She stated that all plans should be taken up with the residents. She stated her concerns about traffic, drought and the large size of the project. She was also concerned about the units being blighted and attracting crime when the condo units don't sell. She stated that the City should consult residents about retailers since the developer seems to only attract national retailers that only cater to one culture.
8. Robert Baldonado, 927 Montecito, San Gabriel, stated that he likes Las Tunas to remain as a residential community. He was concerned about the water usage for this project due to the serious drought problem we're currently facing. He suggested putting off this project due to this reason. He was also concerned about traffic and noise. He stated that he hasn't seen any of the Commissioners attend the San Gabriel United group's meetings to listen to the neighbors' concerns about the City.
9. David Zhang, 706 W. Las Tunas, San Gabriel, is the son of the business owners at this location. He stated that his parents' business is being displaced because of this project. They have been tenants there for over 12 years running a successful restaurant business. They have been informed about the project at the beginning of the year. Their rental contract expired in February 2014. He stated that if they are being forced out, they do not have any compensation for the losses they will incur. As tenants, they cannot do anything. They are also afraid of losing their loyal customers.
10. Terry Kerger, 709 Domingo Drive, San Gabriel, stated that he hasn't heard of any business coming in to the building. He stated that the existing businesses are not all that pretty but they serve the community well. He is concerned what type of new businesses will be coming in. He stated that the Commission should advise the community what the policy is for future developments or new businesses that come to the City.

This concludes the public hearing portion.

Commissioners' Discussion

Vice-Chair Klawiter stated that it is difficult when there are cross-purposes in the community. He pointed out that there are a number of people that don't want to see any changes in the community and that everything is fine as it is. As a Commission, he stated that they don't work as a vacuum. He stated that the Commission does not skirt the issues. He was disappointed to hear people from the audience almost accusing the Commission that they don't hear the neighbors' concerns. He stated that the Commission is always here at this meeting once a month, and pointed out that this is a public meeting where people can come to voice their concerns. He also stated that he lives in the City and shares the same concerns but is here also to look after the future of the City. He stated that the highest and best use of any property is not having it sit empty. He stated that the developer went out of his way to address all the issues. He stated that this is a quality development, and this is not the end of the road. If people who oppose the project do not like what was going to be decided tonight, he encouraged them to take this issue to the City Council. He added that he strongly suggests that they do that.

Commissioner Lou stated that all of the three concerns he brought up at the last meeting have been addressed. The revised plans largely answered his questions but he still feels the massing is larger than what he would have liked. However, he stated that the developer has followed all the requirements under the Mission District Specific Plan.

Commissioner Zawodny acknowledged the passion and concerns of the neighbors tonight. He stated that the Planning Division helps manage the City's development projects. If anyone wants to find out what's going on, staff is available in person, by phone or email during the week to give answers. He stated that upon listening to all the comments, it looks like a 10-story building is being built, which it is not the case. The building will be off of a back street and off of an alley. He stated, as an architect, he looks at buildings from every point of view and carefully measure solutions. He stated that this is a fairly considered development that will have a positive impact in the community.

Before going to a vote, Vice-Chair Klawiter thanked everyone and recognized it was not an easy thing to do where people are tired of coming to meetings to voice their opinions, displeasure and concerns. He thanked them for taking the time off of their personal life and the Commission appreciates it.

Vice-Chair Klawiter made the motion to approve item PL-13-090 subject to the recommended conditions of approval. Commissioner Zawodny seconded the motion.

Ayes: Klawiter, Lou, and Zawodny
Noes: None

3-0 vote; motion carried

At this point, the Commission took a 2-minute recess. After the recess, Chairman Garden and Commissioner Vera rejoined the Commission.

**2. 402 E. Las Tunas Dr.
Planning Case No. PL-14-039
Applicant: Kenneth Pang**

This report was presented by Assistant Planner Fang-zhou Zhou regarding a Tentative Tract Map allowing the construction of a new 9,420 sq. ft. medical office condominium building located in the C-1 (Retail Commercial) Zone. The applicant is also requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) allowing for a 20 percent reduction in the number of required parking spaces. Additionally, the applicant is requesting a Variance to allow for a 5 ft. reduction in the required side yard landscape buffer along the rear parking lot and a Variance to increase the amount of compact spaces from 35 percent to 71.7 percent.

Commissioners' Discussion

**2. 402 E. Las Tunas Dr.
Planning Case No.
PL-14-039
Applicant: Kenneth Pang
Approved.**

This report was reviewed and exempted for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per Guidelines Section 15303 (c) (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures).

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve PL-13-115, subject to the recommended conditions of approval.

Mr. Kenneth Pang, applicant, 402 E. Las Tunas, stated that he was fine with the conditions of approvals and is available to answer any questions from the Commission.

Since no one from the audience came forward to speak about the project, Chairman Garden closed the public hearing portion for this item.

Commissioners' Discussion

Commissioner Lou commended the project team for its good design and proposal.

Commissioner Vera stated that the project team adequately addressed the reduced number of parking.

Commissioner Zawodny inquired about making the parking spaces look larger.

Chairman Garden suggested removing two parking spaces, numbers 27 and 28, and would be a better use for the dead-end parking spaces.

Commissioner Lou concurred with Chairman Garden. The location is close to a public transit. Usually, people avoid parking on the last spot of a garage. He added that it would also be difficult to go in and out of a tight space.

The Commission suggested to the applicant about better parking circulation and relocation of the transformer by the trash enclosure to the rear to add more parking spaces. The applicant stated he will make those changes to accommodate their suggestions.

Vice-Chair Klawiter stated that this is a tough narrow lot to work with but the applicant and his team did a good job in accommodating all the requirements, coming up with substantial buffering and landscaping. He was overall pleased with the proposed project. He also added that this is a great improvement on Las Tunas since this was a vacant lot being made into a good use.

Chairman Garden made the motion to approve PL-14-039 subject to the recommended conditions of approval with the added condition to remove parking spaces 27 and 28, replacing them with landscaping to address the hammerhead issue, and relocating the transformer to the rear. Vice-Chair Klawiter seconded the motion.

Ayes: Garden, Klawiter, Lou, Vera and Zawodny
Noes: None

5-0 vote; motion carried.

**3. 402-404 E. Valley Blvd.
Planning Case No. PL-13-115
Applicant: Tao Hou**

This item was presented by Assistant Planning Zhou regarding a Conditional Use Permit to allow beer and wine service in an existing restaurant located at 402-404 E. Valley Blvd., in the MU-C (Mixed-Use Corridor) Zone.

Commissioners' Discussion

**3. 402-404 E. Valley Blvd.
Planning Case No. PL-13-115
Applicant: Tao Hou
Approved.**

This report was reviewed and exempted for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per Guidelines Section 153031, Class 3 (Existing Facilities).

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approves PL-13-115, subject to the recommended conditions of approval.

Mr. Tao Hou, applicant, 402-404 E. Valley Blvd., stated that his customers would like to have beer or wine together with their meal. Serving liquor along with their dishes would improve his business.

Since no one from the audience came forward to speak about the project, Chairman Garden closed the public hearing portion for this item.

Commissioners' Discussion

Commissioner Zawodny asked the applicant for his plan of action when patrons who become drunk try to create problems such as making a lot of noise late at night, disrupting the neighbors, or throwing bottles in the lot.

Mr. Hou stated that he plans to hire a certified security guard after 10 p.m. to make sure to keep the noise down and be a good neighbor.

Mr. Gallatin stated that loitering in the back of restaurants is prohibited. He also added that while the Police Department did not require the applicant to hire a security guard, he commended the owner for taking the initiative to do so.

Commissioner Zawodny stated that he doesn't want to see the applicant lose his CUP if he doesn't take care of potential problems. He suggested having a good, responsible manager would help him be a good neighbor.

The Commissioners also suggested adding to the conditions of approval to hire a licensed, trained security guard, post a "No Loitering" sign in the parking lot, and have the last call for liquor service no later than 1:40 a.m. Mr. Hou stated he is fine with these added conditions.

Chairman Garden moved to approve PL-13-115, subject to the recommended conditions of approval including three additional conditions stated above.

Ayes: Garden, Klawiter, Lou, Vera and Zawodny
Noes: None

5-0 vote; motion carried.

PLANNING COMMISSION ITEMS

None.

STAFF ITEM

None.

Commissioners Discussion

STAFF ITEM

None.

STAFF ITEM

None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, Chairman Garden moved to adjourn to the Special Joint Meeting of the Planning Commission and the Design Review Commission on Monday, December 1, 2014 at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers, City Hall, 2nd Floor, 425 S. Mission Drive, San Gabriel, CA.

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The Planning Commission meetings are available on tape and may be reviewed within 90 days after the meeting in the Community Development Department office at City Hall during regular business hours.

Norman Garden, Chairman
City of San Gabriel
Planning Commission

ATTEST: _____
Jackie Wong, Secretary
City of San Gabriel Planning Commission