

**CITY OF SAN GABRIEL**

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**

**May 11, 2015**

**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, May 11, 2015.**

Chairman Garden 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 Vince 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 Special Planning Commission Meetings on March 9, 2015 and April 15, 2015.**  
Vice-Chair Klawiter moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Lou seconded the motion. There being no objections, the minutes were approved.

**CONSENT ITEMS**

**Minutes of the Special Planning Commission Meetings on March 9, 2015 and April 15, 2015  
Approved.**

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Debbie Saito, 707 Abbot Avenue, congratulated the City for the Olson Grand Opening. She thought it was a well-designed project. She next expressed concern about water usage. San Gabriel's goal to cut water usage by 20% is now imposed. She discussed residential yards: 85% vegetation and 15% bark, etc. landscaping. She thinks drought tolerant plants look horrible and the City does not presently allow synthetic turf. For the City to allow 50% to turf – weeds are knee deep. City Attorney Kress inquired about the City's disallowance of synthetic turf and a discussion ensued.

No one else came forward to speak; therefore he 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.

**EXPLANATION OF PUBLIC HEARING PROCEDURES**

**Explained by City Attorney Kress**

At this point, Commissioner Vera recused herself from the room. She has a legal conflict with item #1 due to her occupation in real estate. She is excused from participating in the Commission with any item relating to residential multi-family projects.

**PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS**

- 1. 608-610 S. Ramona St.**  
**Planning Case No. PL-14-004**  
**Applicant: Leo Wu (Architect)**

This item was presented by Associate Planner Larissa De La Cruz regarding a demolition of three existing residential structures to construct a six-unit residential condominium on a 23,924 sq ft lot. This project will include a Tentative Tract Map and a Variance request. The proposed project is located in the R-2 (Grapevine Residential) zone within the boundaries of the Mission District Specific Plan.

**ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:** The project was reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements and staff determined that this project required a Mitigated Declaration of Environmental Impact.

On April 20, 2015, the Notice of Intent to adopt a Mitigated Declaration of Environmental Impact was prepared and posted with the Los Angeles County Clerk’s Office.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve PL-14-004, subject to the recommended conditions of approval and adopt a Mitigated Declaration of Environmental Impact.

Mr. Leo Wu, project architect, stated that he will provide more than the allotted open space, accepts all conditions of approval, and is available for questions.

Testimony

1. Debbie Saito, 707 Abbot Ave., stated that she was confused as to why three buildings would be demolished to build six new condominiums when she thought the City is all about preserving Single Family Dwellings.

Associate Planner De La Cruz explained that there are two lots and one is empty. The existing structures are all dilapidated, are a nuisance in the neighborhood, and have had code enforcement cases on the property.

No one else spoke; therefore, Chairman Garden closed the public hearing portion for this item.

Commissioners’ Discussion

The Planning Commissioners conceptualized and discussed the project. All of them agreed that this project will be a great improvement to the existing site. The scale and massing were just right and it has a pleasant design where a courtyard is incorporated amongst the four buildings on the property. They also liked that the existing mature oak tree is being preserved.

Chairman Garden made the motion to approve PL-14-004 subject to the recommended conditions of approval and adopt a Mitigated Declaration of Environmental Impact. Commissioner Lou seconded the motion.

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

4-0 vote. Motion carried.

At this point, Commissioner Vera joined the Planning Commission for the rest of the items being heard this evening.

**PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS**

- 1. 608-610 S. Ramona St.**  
**Planning Case No.**  
**PL-14-004**  
**Applicant: Leo Wu**  
**(Architect)**  
**Approved.**

Testimony

Commissioners’ Discussion

**2. 500 E. Valley Blvd.  
Planning Case No. PL-14-052  
Applicant: Simon Lee & Associates**

**2. 500 E. Valley Blvd.  
Planning Case No.  
PL-14-052  
Applicant: Simon Lee &  
Associates  
Approved.**

This item was presented by Associate Planner De La Cruz regarding a Tentative Parcel Map request to consolidate four parcels into one for a new 10,210 sq ft single-story commercial building. The properties are on a Mixed-Used Corridor (MU-C) zone and are within the boundaries of the Valley Blvd Specific Plan.

**ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:** The project was reviewed and except for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements under CEQA Exemption 15302 Class 2 “Replacement or Reconstruction.”

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve PL-14-052, subject to the recommended conditions of approval.

Mr. Simon Lee, project architect, gave an overview of the project.

Mr. Carlos Velasquez, project traffic engineer, addressed all traffic issues.

Testimonies

Testimonies

1. Henry Chan, 1628 Allegro Square unit B, 20-year resident, expressed the following concerns:
  - Traffic circulation;
  - Street parking problems; and
  - Increased traffic on Allegro Square; Suggested to use Walnut Street instead.
2. Josephine Elizondo, 1622 Walnut St., 53-year resident, expressed the following concerns:
  - Overflow street parking on Allegro Square and on Walnut St.;
  - Existing traffic on Walnut St. and on Valley Blvd.;
  - Potentially losing vegetation and mountain views due to the new construction; and
  - No Anglo markets for residents in San Gabriel;
  - Inquired about the future of the existing mature tree on site. Ms. De La Cruz stated that it will be removed for its large roots have lifted the concrete on the street.
3. Charles Sances, 1808 S. California St., 50+ years resident, expressed the following concerns:
  - Opposes this project; wants to keep San Gabriel as a bedroom city as before;
  - Increased traffic especially on Valley Blvd.; and
  - Doesn't want San Gabriel to be an international city.
4. Tod Nathanson, project realtor, president of Eli Real Estate, stated that residents should familiarize themselves with the proposed project first before going forward. He explained that the project's size is not going to change. Mr. Dunn, the property owner, is spending \$1M for subterranean parking so that there will be minimal or no parking impact on the surrounding streets. Mr. Dunn has carefully thought out the building plans and has been very considerate of whatever impacts this project will bring to the neighborhood.
5. Dan Garcia, 710 Pearl St., expressed the following concerns:
  - Traffic on Valley Blvd;
  - Sensitivity to the residents' concerns; and
  - High density and traffic make San Gabriel unlivable.

No one else spoke; therefore, Chairman Garden closed the public hearing portion for this item.

Commissioners' Discussion

At the request of Chairman Garden, Planning Manager Gallatin explained what the Floor Area Ratio means and the Valley Boulevard Specific Plan. He then added that the proposed project, which is one story high, is replacing an existing one-story building.

Commissioner Zawodny stated that this project would be a clear improvement in the area. There is underground parking which takes parking off of residential streets around it. He added that the existing building doesn't particularly look appealing. He concluded that this is a reasonable development where the developer is requesting a reasonable approval for a like-for-like for the project.

Vice-Chair Klawiter stated that this is a net wash with 10,000 sq ft in replacement with improvement in quality. He inquired if there can be mechanisms in place for signage or parking restrictions to keep cars from Allegro Square.

City Attorney Kress stated that residential parking permits won't take care of the 18-unit development at the end of that street but if there are issues that staff did not anticipate for this project, he recommended that the neighbors can petition for residents-only parking on Allegro Square.

Mr. Velazquez, traffic engineer, stated that there was no signage considered during the traffic study and that the city engineer found the study acceptable. The intersection of Allegro Square and Valley Blvd. operates at an acceptable rate and no mitigation measures are needed. Restricting a No Left Turn onto Valley from Allegro Square would impact traffic on Valley Blvd.

Mr. Chan came up and reiterated that making a left turn on Allegro to Valley is almost next to impossible. He suggested having a left hand turn on Lafayette instead and go out on the west side of Valley Blvd.

Commissioner Lou stated that he is concerned about the traffic. He drove by at 4 p.m. this afternoon and tried making a left turn to Allegro Square but couldn't due to the heavy traffic. He added that he is concerned about the cars' headlights hitting the residential area when coming out of the subterranean parking. He is also concerned that the mature tree is being removed considering its huge size.

Mr. Gallatin stated that the tree removal determination was made by the Public Works Director and how it is impacting the streets and the proposed project. Also, the developer is required to put new trees as replacements.

Commissioner Vera stated that Commissioners are required to go to training and that they use the City's Plans as their guide. While the Plans were created at a different time, the residents were desperate for developments in the City. She stated that the residents are adamant for more parking and that the developer has met that requirements and is going above and beyond of what is being required. She encouraged residents to discuss the issue with the City Council if they are having trouble getting out of that street.

Mr. Gallatin added that a traffic signal can't be arbitrarily placed since it has to meet certain requirements. It also costs upwards of \$200,000 to install one signal light.

Chairman Garden suggested that the light synchronization should be looked at. Mr. Gallatin stated that he will talk to the Public Works Director to get it corrected with the County. He explained to the audience that the Planning Commission doesn't have as much authority as the City Council and encouraged them to take up these matters to their elected officials. He added that from a density and parking point of view, the developer is bending over backwards to make this a viable project. The traffic issue is a much broader concern and can be taken up with the City Council or the City Manager so that a comprehensive traffic study can be done.

Mr. Gallatin stated that two major special projects are being presented in next year’s budget which is the citywide parking study and the other is the update of the Development Code. It is up to the City Council which ones they would want to fund or do first.

Chairman Garden made the motion to approve PL-14-052, subject to the recommended conditions of approval.

Vice-Chair Klawiter seconded the motion.

Ayes: Garden, Klawiter, Vera, and Zawodny  
Noes: Lou

4:1; Motion carried.

**3. 730 Pearl St.**  
**Planning Case No. PL-14-133**  
**Applicant: Eric Li**

This item was presented by Assistant Planner Fang-zhou Zhou regarding a Conditional Use Permit to run a car rental business in a C-3 (General Commercial) zone.

**ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:** The project was reviewed and except for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements under CEQA Exemption 15301 Class 1 (Existing Facilities).

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve PL-14-133, subject to the recommended conditions of approval.

Mr. Zhou stated that the applicant is proposing to construct a surface lot with five parking spaces. The structure onsite was previously occupied by a hardwood floor business. The property has been commercially used for over 20 years and its surrounding parcels are also zoned as such.

Mr. Eric Li, applicant, 730 Pearl St., stated that the parking spaces are within the ADA standards and will provide more parking than what the business is required to provide. He stated that there will be no parking on Pearl Street for its customers and employees. He also added that he agrees to all of the conditions of approval.

The Planning Commissioners inquired how the business process is handled and about the tight parking space for cars to turn around and exit from the lot. They also inquired if there are plans to improve the landscaping on the front of the property. Mr. Li stated that there are currently no plans to improve the landscaping.

Testimonies

1. Virginia Cardenas, 720 Pearl St., expressed the following concerns:
  - Disapproves of this business in her neighborhood; Pearl St. is full of cars and has 24-hours of chaos on the street;
  - Employees at nearby businesses (i.e. dialysis center and Obamacare office) use Pearl Street for parking;
  - Provided a petition to deny this project;
  - Noise from paramedic vans with engines on left running while waiting for patients at a nearby business;
  - Children in the area cannot play on their front yard due to too many cars on Pearl St.
  - Previous hardwood floor business did not have any customers that go there since the owner always went out to see his customers.

**3. 730 Pearl St.**  
**Planning Case No.**  
**PL-14-133**  
**Applicant: Eric Li**  
**Denied.**

Testimonies

2. Dan Garcia, 710 Pearl St., expressed the following concerns:
- Entire community is against this business;
  - Too much congestion on Pearl St.; Suggested to have illuminated crosswalk for safety of pedestrians; and
  - Impossible to turn on Pearl St. due to construction on San Gabriel Blvd.
  - Inquired that if City approves for only three vehicles for this project, would it allow having more later on. Mr. Gallatin stated that a condition can be added to not allow more than three vehicles.
3. Teresa Chavez, 725 Pearl St., expressed the following concerns:
- Traffic;
  - Trash and debris from nearby businesses;
  - Lack of parking in the area; and
  - Cars speeding on Pearl St.;
  - Suggested for applicant to look elsewhere for his business.

No one else spoke; therefore, Chairman Garden closed the public hearing portion for this item.

Commissioners' Discussion

Commissioners' Discussion

The Planning Commissioners conceptualized and discussed the project. They were concerned about the parking circulation not being feasible and the tight lot also shares space with a trash enclosure. They felt that this is the wrong business at the wrong location.

Chairman Garden moved to deny PL-14-133 since the Planning Commission does not agree with the findings proposed by staff and cannot make the findings to approve a Conditional Use Permit.

Vice-Chair Klawiter seconded the motion.

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

5-0; Motion carried.

City Attorney Kress explained that this decision is subject to appeal by the applicant within 10 business days.

**4. 1806 S. San Gabriel Blvd.  
Planning Case No. PL-15-006  
Applicant: Simon Chan**

**4. 1806 S. San Gabriel Blvd.  
Planning Case No.  
PL-15-006  
Applicant: Simon Chan  
Approved.**

This item was presented by Assistant Planner Zhou regarding a request for a Conditional Use Permit to operate an adult day care center in the MU-C/R (Mixed-Use Corridor/Residential) zone.

**ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:** The project was reviewed and except for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements under CEQA Exemption 15301 Class 1 (Existing Facilities).

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve PL-15-006, subject to the recommended conditions of approval.

Mr. Chai and Mr. Mai, directors of the proposed adult day care facility, 1806 S. San Gabriel Blvd., were present to answer questions. They stated that they agree to all of the conditions of approval.

Testimonies

1. Debbie Saito, 707 Abbot, stated that this project is a great idea. She inquired about parking circulation and how hazardous materials are going to be disposed.

Mr. Chai stated that they follow strict federal, state and local regulations and abide by them including disposal of all hazardous materials. He also added that their trash enclosures are properly locked like any other medical facility.

2. Charles Sances, 1808 S. California St., inquired where the parking exit is for this facility.

Mr. Gallatin stated that vehicles will be going in and out of San Gabriel Blvd.

Mr. Sances stated that it is not a problem for him.

No one else spoke; therefore, Chairman Garden closed the public hearing portion for this item.

Commissioners' Discussion

The Planning Commission conceptualized and discussed the project.

Commissioner Vera suggested adding a condition wherein the facility cannot rent the building for any use after hours or on weekends when the day care facility is not open. She mentioned that she knows of another day care business that rents out their facility when their regular business is closed.

All the Commissioners agreed that this is a good reuse of the facility with improvements planned in the interior and exterior.

Chairman Garden made the motion to approve PL-15-006 subject to the recommended conditions of approval including adding a condition that any proposed use other than what was applied for and approved in this Conditional Use Permit requires an advance approval from the Planning Division. That approval process may determine a proposed use to be permitted and be co-existing or determine the Conditional Use Permit for the property would be amended to allow other uses.

Commissioner Vera seconded the motion.

Ayes: Garden, Klawiter, Lou, Vera, and Zawodny

Noes: None

5-0; Motion carried.

**STAFF ITEM**

**1. Extension of entitlements for the Crowne Plaza Hotel development at 221 E. Valley Blvd. (Planning Case No. PL-12-010)**

This item was presented by Planning Manager Gallatin. The project has new owners who also own and operate the Lux City Center Hotel in downtown Los Angeles and the Sheraton LAX. Their corporate offices are based in Shenzhen, China. Their development group has extensive experience in large-scale developments in the US, China and abroad.

The new owners are requesting an extension of entitlements. They are retaining the original architects for this project. There are some changes to the plans. The changes include eliminating 16 rooms, one Chinese restaurant, and the mezzanine level. The proposed original steakhouse stays.

Testimonies

Commissioners' Discussion

**STAFF ITEM**

**1. Extension of entitlements for the Crowne Plaza Hotel development at 221 E. Valley Blvd. (Planning Case No. PL-12-010)  
Approved.**

Mr. Gallatin stated that the new total number of rooms will now be 276. A new subterranean parking level will be added.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve PL-12-010, and have a 9-month extension for entitlements to April 22, 2016.

Commissioners' Discussion

Commissioners' Discussion

The Planning Commission discussed the project and all agreed to grant the extension of entitlements to April 22, 2016.

Chairman Garden made the motion to approve extending the entitlements to April 22, 2016.

Vice-Chair Klawiter seconded the motion.

Ayes: Garden, Klawiter, Lou, Vera, and Zawodny

Noes: None

5-0; Motion carried.

**PLANNING COMMISSION ITEMS**

**PLANNING COMMISSION ITEMS**

1. Chairman Garden stated that he won't be in town for the June 8, 2015 Planning Commission meeting.
2. Vice-Chair Klawiter congratulated the City for securing a loan with iBank to fund street improvements.
3. Mr. Gallatin shared with the Commissioners that a new economic development manager has been hired and will start on June 1, 2015.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to discuss, Chairman Garden moved to adjourn to the Regular Planning Commission meeting on Monday, June 8, 2015 at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers, City Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

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Norman Garden, Chairman  
City of San Gabriel  
Planning Commission

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