



City of Santa Barbara

Planning Division

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

OCTOBER 4, 2007

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Charmaine Jacobs called the meeting to order at 1:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL:

Present:

Chair Charmaine Jacobs
Vice-Chair George C. Myers
Commissioners Bruce Bartlett, Stella Larson, George C. Myers, Addison S. Thompson and Harwood A. White, Jr.

Absent:

John Jostes

STAFF PRESENT:

Jan Hubbell, Senior Planner
N. Scott Vincent, Assistant City Attorney
Irma Unzueta, Project Planner
Stacey Wilson, Associate Transportation Planner
Julie Rodriguez, Planning Commission Secretary

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS:

A. Requests for continuances, withdrawals, postponements, or addition of ex-agenda items.

None.

B. Announcements and appeals.

None.

C. Comments from members of the public pertaining to items not on this agenda.

Chair Jacobs opened the public hearing at 1:02 P.M.

Patricia Aoyama addressed the Commission asking to have the Staff Hearing Officer appeal to the Planning Commission for 2140 Mission Ridge Road, originally scheduled for today, heard soon and submitted a letter.

With no one else wishing to speak, the hearing was closed at 1:03 P.M.

II. CONCEPT REVIEW: ACTUAL TIME: 1:03 P.M.

Chair Jacobs stepped down from hearing the following item to avoid any perceived conflict of interest since her husband is an attorney in the same law firm as the counsel for the applicant. Commissioner Myers assumed the Chair.

APPLICATION OF CAMERON CAREY, AGENT FOR AMERICAN BAPTIST HOMES OF THE WEST (PROPERTY OWNER), 900 CALLE DE LOS AMIGOS, 049-040-050, 049-040-053, 049-040-054, 049-440-015, 049-440-016 , A-1, E-1, and E-3, SINGLE RESIDENTIAL ZONES, GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION: RESIDENTIAL, 1 UNIT/ACRE & 5 UNITS/ACRE (MST2005-00742)

The proposed project involves the construction of 35 two-bedroom independent living units on multiple parcels within the existing Valle Verde Retirement Community Campus. The Valle Verde Retirement Community is made up of five independent parcels totaling approximately 59.75 acres. Nine of the units are detached and 26 are attached, with 34 of the units proposed with attached one-car garages. Seventeen of the units are proposed on parcel 049-440-015, which is known as the "Rutherford Property". The remaining 18 units are infill and are proposed to be located throughout the existing campus. There are 219 existing residential units. This combined with the 35 units would bring the total to 254 residential units. The present Conditional Use Permit allows 254 units. The facility's Central Core (Common Area) would be upgraded, including renovations to the existing gazebos, a redeveloped Theater Multipurpose Room, expanded outside dining, a new fine dining component, a café, expanded spa services, resident's business center, and fitness center. The Central Core component of the proposed project consists of 10,888 square feet of remodel space and 12,755 square feet of new construction. Approximately 98 new parking spaces are proposed, including a new 43 space staff/guest parking lot. Grading for the project would involve 25,140 cubic yards of cut, 24,860 cubic yards of fill and 280 cubic yards of export. An existing 1,300 square foot residential unit and 17 oak trees are proposed to be removed.

The discretionary applications required for this project are:

1. Conditional Use Permit Amendment to allow expansion of the Valle Verde Retirement Community (SBMC § 28.94.030);
2. Modifications to allow less than the required distance between main buildings on the project site (SBMC § 28.15.070);
3. Modifications to allow less than the required front yard setback for some of the proposed residential units (SBMC § 28.15.060); and

4. Modifications to allow less than the required interior yard setback for some of the proposed residential units (SBMC § 28.15.060).

The purpose of the concept review is to allow the Planning Commission an opportunity to review the proposed project design at a conceptual level and provide the Applicant and Staff with feedback and direction regarding the proposed project scope, design layout, and neighborhood compatibility. No formal action on the development proposal will be taken at the concept review, nor will any determination be made regarding environmental review of the proposed project.

Case Planner: Irma Unzueta, Project Planner

Email: iunzueta@santabarbaraca.gov

Irma Unzueta, Project Planner, gave the staff presentation.

Staff answered Planning Commission questions about how many acres were included in the staff's recommended oak woodland preserve; explained why a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) amendment is needed when the proposal is to bring the number of units to the original CUP authorization, and the difference between the CUP maximum for number of residents and staff and the number actually onsite.

Ron Schaffer, Executive Director of Valle Verde, gave the applicant presentation and also introduced his team: Keith Nolan and Justin Van Mullem, Architects; Rick Stienfeld, Project Manager; Kirsten Ayres, Community Outreach Liaison; Cameron Carey, Land Use Planner; and Steven Amerikaner, Land Use Attorney.

Mr. Schaffer addressed Planning Commission questions about the number of people living and working on the project site; the change in bedroom count from what is present now and the number proposed; and the planning for the future of the existing skilled nursing facility; and how the master plan will be phased with consideration to the grading on the site.

Commissioner Thompson reminded all present today that the purpose of the hearing was limited to a concept review of the project and not approval.

Mr. Amerikaner answered Planning Commission questions about the potential future development of the Oak Woodland, responding that there are no plans for its development but would like to keep future options open; and explained the nexus between averaging the slopes of large areas and development on 30% slopes.

Ms. Hubbell added that there is flexibility in looking at the average slope and explained the evolution of averaging slopes as opposed to using the actual slope of individual areas.

Chair Myers opened the public hearing at 2:02 P.M.

The following people spoke in support of the project:

1. Art Christman
2. Virginia Jones
3. Donald Carey
4. Louise Carey
5. Norman J. Boyan
6. Charleen Mee
7. Jane Zonka
8. Reverend Michelle Woodhouse
9. Ragnar Thorensen
10. Henry Jones
11. Art Montgomery
12. John Mandle
13. Virginia Robinson
14. Don Wimpres
15. Dorothy Burkhart

The following people spoke in opposition of the project or with concerns:

1. John Horton: See letter
2. Tom Burgher: See letter.
3. Judy Orias: Traffic (Torino Drive, Modoc and Calle de los Amigos, Las Positas and Modoc), pedestrian safety, adequate employee parking, drainage to Arroyo Burro Creek.
4. James Venturino, on behalf of Germaine Chastain: maintain the two roles of the Rutherford Parcel: 1) physical buffer between incompatible uses, suggesting no more units allowed on the Rutherford parcel than would be allowed by slope density calculations, and 2) ecological buffer – project would destroy edge of oak woodland; too much grading, leading to drainage problems.
5. Heike Kilian: Opposes construction of units 1-5; concerned with density proposed for the Rutherford parcel; keep trail and wildlife corridor on Rutherford parcel; concerned with proposed street; raising administration parking; construction traffic and safety on Torino Drive.
6. Ruth Georgi: Rutherford Parcel will have too many buildings too close together on the parcel; maintain the buffer between Valle Verde and Hidden Oaks Estates, eliminate the five units closest to neighboring homes and reduce the size of the rest; 20' high homes would impact views
7. Bob Hull: Traffic
8. Carl Mueller: Plan lacks accredited Continuing Care Facility
9. Dr. Richard Nagy: Traffic, proposed street would impact safety to children who use existing park. Endangered species impacted by development; feasibility study requested.

With no one else wishing to speak, the public hearing was closed at 3:12 P.M.

Mr. Amerikaner appreciated public comments and will study issues presented during permit process.

Mr. Schaeffer answered additional Planning Commission questions about the health care facility's availability to non-residents as an in-patient facility.

Stacey Wilson, Assistant Transportation Planner, responded to the Commission's questions about the traffic concerns raised during public comment and explained that the proposed road would meet sight distances requirements. Trips generated by the project would be low and not expected to result in traffic impacts to intersections identified. Ms. Wilson stated that Calle de los Amigos and Torino Drive intersection does not meet warrants to replace the two-way stop with a four-way stop. Additionally, Modoc Road intersections do not meet warrants for a traffic signal, nor is there a nexus to the project. Traffic calming elements are being studied by the City for many neighborhoods and can be considered in this neighborhood once they have been successfully applied to other neighborhoods. Speeds in the area have been reviewed by Staff and are not considered to be excessive. Potential traffic impacts were analyzed at a staff level and an additional report was not requested to confirm ITE numbers. Construction related impacts have not been reviewed at this time for impact on roads. A traffic control plan would need to be considered.

Ms. Hubbell stated that there are a standard set of conditions of approval that mitigate construction traffic impacts, but that additional conditions could be added as needed.

Staff answered additional Planning Commission questions about the differences in the number of oak trees being removed varying from the applicant's report; and the number of cubic yards of material exported.

Although there were many public comments on traffic, one Commissioner acknowledged that traffic was not one of the issues that was asked to be discussed at this hearing.

Commissioners' comments on topics discussed:

A. Development on the "Rutherford Property"

1. Commissioners felt that the development of Rutherford Property is too dense and should be further reduced, including relooking at the square footage compared to other units at Valle Verde.
2. Commissioners stated that the units still encroach too much on Hidden Oaks.
3. Westerly units are excessive for that part of the property. Most Commissioners did not support units 1-5 in that location. Felt there is a better area to locate these residential units.

4. One Commissioner would prefer not to see any development on the Rutherford property, but if there is to be development in this area, it should only be a few units.
5. With regard to the CUP, more concerned with square footage than number of units.
6. Too much grading proposed in order to create a flat site.

B. Development on Zone 5 Hillside

2. Too much is being cut in this area. Some Commissioners suggested either smaller units or fewer units.
3. One Commissioner was flexible with Zone 5, as long as nothing happened at the Rutherford Property.

C. Development on slopes of 30% or more

1. Commissioners worried about encroaching into the slope. Comments show that people would want to stay at one story and should not need to go into the hillside, suggested that project be pulled back.
2. Appropriate in some areas when grading is handled sensitively.
3. Several Commissioners agreed with the flexibility of averaging slopes.

D. Open Space/Oak Woodland

1. Most Commissioners felt that the woodland should be defined by actual location of where the oak woodland actually exists. Did not feel it should be defined acreage, but would like to see more than five acres preserved as open space.
2. One Commissioner felt that how much of the land is set aside is a negotiation between the City and the applicant. The acreage of Oak Woodland to be restricted should be closer to Staff's recommendation. Oak Woodland area is steep; its highest and best use is as open space.
3. One Commissioner felt that no development should ever occur in the Oak Woodland area. Expects a generous area of Oak Woodland to be preserved as open space.
4. Concerned with too much encroachment of development into open space areas.
5. Concerned with interruption of access to existing wildlife habitat in Oak Woodland by the length and height of retaining walls.

E. Retaining Walls

1. Does not support retaining walls.
2. The project should not need so many retaining walls and grading.

3. Units that abut the hillside have been designed to set at the base of stacked retaining walls. These units would no longer enjoy a woodland, but be forced to face retaining walls.
4. Proposed retaining walls do not meet Single Family Residential Design Guidelines. Suggested that the project engineer read the City's guidelines – too high, too long and questionable materials.
5. Study length, materials and height of retaining walls.
6. Noted that the proposed retaining walls would run almost the full length of the boundary between the developed area and the open space, losing the connection between the project and the open space and losing all migration corridor connectivity.

F. Grading

1. Too much grading, in general, and on Rutherford property in particular; large houses with a steep footprint would have to be buried deep to keep from impacting views of adjacent neighbors, resulting in too much retaining wall requirement.
2. Commissioners requested reducing the grading and retaining walls on Zone 5, even if it means smaller units.
3. Suggested moving the zone 5 units to where the employee parking is proposed and not have all the employees drive to the back of the site.
4. Continue to work reducing overall grading and on balancing grading on-site.

G. Parking

1. Two Commissioners wondered if parking permits on street would discourage staff from parking on street.
2. One Commissioner supports some grading into the hillside in Zone 2 to allow for an adequate number of employee parking spaces.
3. Commissioners felt that employee parking should be confined to the site.
4. One Commissioner felt that employee parking should be placed under the Administration Building parking lot to reduce traffic into the Valle Verde facility.

H. Miscellaneous Comments

1. The Commission appreciated the applicant's development of a Master Plan and making use of a concept review.
2. One Commissioner felt that while the program is admirable, the proposal does not match up with the aspirations of the program for this specific site.

3. One Commissioner cautioned on the request for traffic calming devices because sometimes they cause impacts for fragile people in cars; prefers enforcement.
4. Suggested that the continuing care program, including nursing facilities, should be included in the Master Plan.
5. Most Commissioners did not support staff housing onsite.
6. One Commissioner felt that the project pushes density to the edge of project site. Suggested that density be placed in the center of the project site instead.
7. Concerned that new units are very different than the rest, therefore changing the character and look of the existing retirement facility.
8. Concerned that all residences being proposed on the project are larger than anything that currently exists at the complex. More density is being pushed to the perimeters and encroaching on the neighbors.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA

A. Committee and Liaison Reports.

Commissioner Larson reported on the October 3, 2007 Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) meeting and the discussion on 518 Garden Street. Two Commissioners were requested to be present at the October 17, 2007 HLC meeting. An enforcement discussion was held regarding the removal of the tree and fountain at El Paseo where the Wine Cask was located.

B. Review of the decisions of the Staff Hearing Officer in accordance with SBMC §28.92.026.

Commissioner White reported that six items that went before the SHO on September 26th.

1. Several modifications were approved; one was continued.
2. 102 E. Pueblo received a modification for a fountain in the front yard.
3. 814 Orange Avenue raised concern over unusual design.

C. Action on the review and consideration of the draft minutes and resolutions listed in I.A.2. of this Agenda.

1. Draft minutes of August 16, 2007
2. Resolution 031-07
2067 Eucalyptus Hill Road
3. Draft minutes of August 30, 2007
4. Resolution 032-07

103 South Calle Cesar Chavez

5. Resolution 033-07
20 and 25 David Love Place

MOTION: Thompson/Larson Approve the draft minutes and resolutions of August 16, as edited; and continue the draft minutes and resolutions of August 30, 2007 until October 11, 2007.

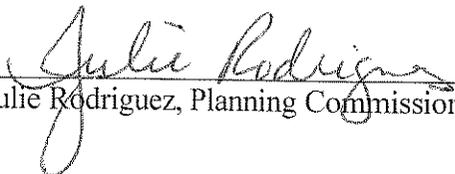
This motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 4 Noes: 0 Abstain: 1 (Bartlett) Absent: 2 (Jacobs, Jostes)

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Jacobs adjourned the meeting at 4:03 P.M.

Submitted by,



Julie Rodriguez, Planning Commission Secretary

