



City of Santa Barbara Planning Division

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

December 11, 2008

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair George C. Myers called the meeting to order at 1:01 P.M.

ROLL CALL:

Present:

Chair George C. Myers
Charmaine Jacobs, John Jostes, Addison S. Thompson and Harwood A. White, Jr.

Commissioner Bruce Bartlett arrived at 1:04 P.M.

Absent:

Vice-Chair Stella Larson

STAFF PRESENT:

Danny Kato, Senior Planner
N. Scott Vincent, Assistant City Attorney
Steve Foley, Supervising Transportation Planner
Dan Gullett, Associate Planner
Chelsey Swanson, Associate Transportation Planner
Julie Rodriguez, Planning Commission Secretary

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS:

1. Requests for continuances, withdrawals, postponements, or addition of ex-agenda items.
None.
2. Announcements and appeals.
 - a) Danny Kato, Senior Planner, reviewed the Planning Commission Tentative Calendar, including the potential cancellation of the January 15, 2008, Planning Commission meeting.
 - b) Mr. Kato reviewed the Staff Hearing Officer meeting calendar.

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

Chair Myers opened the public hearing at 1:08 P.M. and, with no one wishing to speak, closed the hearing.

II. CONCEPT REVIEW:

ACTUAL TIME: 1:08 P.M.

RECUSALS:

To avoid any actual or perceived conflict of interest, Commissioner Jacobs recused herself from hearing this item due to her husband working for the same law firm representing the applicant.

APPLICATION OF STEVE FORT, AGENT FOR WEBSTER PROPERTIES L.P, 4151 FOOTHILL ROAD AND 675 CIENEGUITAS ROAD (OWNER: BRITSCGIL, LLC), APNS 059-160-017, -021 AND -023, COUNTY ZONING: SC, COUNTY GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION: NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL (MST2008-00496)

The proposed project includes annexation of a 4.13 acre site located within the City's Sphere of influence at the southwest corner of Foothill Road and Cieneguitas Road. The existing development on the site includes a 1,750 square foot abandoned gas station and garage. The proposed project includes construction of a new two and three story 71,009 square foot office building to be used as an educational institution. Both Fielding Graduate Institute and Antioch University are interested in leasing portions of the proposed building for use as approximately 30% office space and 70% classroom space. 199 parking spaces are proposed, including seven parking spaces on the 0.23 acre Foothill Pet Hospital lot (APN 059-160-021). The Foothill Pet Hospital lot would also be annexed as part of the project.

Annexation of the subject lots was initiated by City Council on March 18, 2003 with a pre-General Plan designation of General Commerce and pre-zoning designations of C-1 (Limited Commercial) and SD-2 (Upper State Street Area Overlay). At that time, the Council also granted the project a preliminary designation as an Economic Development project.

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 land use and design. **No formal action on the development proposal will be taken at the concept review**, nor will any determination be made regarding the environmental review of the project.

As proposed, the development proposal will require the following discretionary applications:

1. Annexation of the subject properties (APNs 059-160-023, 059-160-017 and 059-160-021) to the City of Santa Barbara and detachment of the properties from Goleta Water District, Goleta Sanitary District, and County Fire Protection District (SBMC Chapter 28.96);
2. General Plan Amendment to add the subject properties to the City's General Plan Map with a General Commerce designation and text amendments as appropriate;
3. Zoning Map Amendment to include the subject properties with C-1 (Limited Commercial) and S-D-2 (Upper State Street Area Overlay) designations;
4. Development Plan to allow 71,009 sf of new non-residential development utilizing floor area from the Vacant Property, Small Addition and, Economic Development categories (SBMC §28.87.300);
5. Conditional Use Permit for an Educational Institution in the C-1 Zone (SBMC §28.94.030.C);
6. Design Review by the Architectural Board of Review (SBMC §22.68.040);
7. Final Economic Development Designation by the City Council for 26,202 sf from the Economic Development Category for an educational institution; and
8. Annexation Map, to be coordinated with LAFCO.

Case Planner: Dan Gullett, Associate Planner

Email: DGullett@SantaBarbaraCA.gov

Dan Gullett, Associate Planner, gave the Staff presentation.

Staff clarified for the Planning Commission the reasoning for the pre-zoning designation of C-1.

Michael Towbes, Webster Properties, LLC, gave the applicant presentation, joined by, Ed Lenvik, Lenvik & Minor Architects.

In response to the Commission's questions, Mr. Towbes indicated that the market studies were received the week of the hearing, and the last communication with Exxon where Exxon expressed unwillingness to modify the property restrictions was in July 2008. He also discussed other retail uses that were considered for the C-1 Zone, and indicated that he does not believe this to be a great location for a retail center. He believes that the demand is for larger office spaces. Mr. Towbes stated that LAFCO would like the property annexed to the City so that Highway 154 would become the City boundary. He clarified that Mobil's deed restrictions include well water, and prohibitions on non-vocational schools, which do not apply to universities. Currently water is provided by the Goleta Water district. Mr. Towbes clarified that the Mobil station building was subsequently occupied by a small health food store, for a short time, and is currently vacant.

Mr. Lenvik responded to the Planning Commission's inquiry about the deed restrictions on basements and underground parking.

Chair Myers opened the public hearing at 1:49 P.M.

William La.Voie, Santa Barbara County Resident, stated site setbacks were important to making a project fit in with the neighborhood and a new traffic study is needed. He expressed concerns about parking and circulation on Foothill Road associated with La Colina Junior High School. He also stated concerns regarding traffic generation and parking demand of a classroom use on the site. Cited concerns with size, bulk, and scale, accidents in the area, and recommended no driveway exit on Foothill Road. Agreed with Architectural Board of Review's findings that Hispanic architecture is not appropriate on this site.

With no one else wishing to speak, the public hearing was closed at 1:55 P.M.

The Commissioners made the following comments:

1. One Commissioner opined that an office building of some type is the only viable option for the property considering the deed restrictions and understood why a neighborhood market would not be viable due to the lack of density in the area. Another Commissioner was disappointed that residential use could not have been considered. Supports more integration of the commercial with the residential use of the neighborhood.
2. Three Commissioners felt that the traffic impacts would be significant and one recommended against any driveway access in or out of Foothill Road. Recommended driveway access of Cieneguitas Road only. One Commissioner recommended a new traffic study.
3. Scenic views from Highway 154 should be taken into consideration in the project design.
4. Recommended consideration for the on-site retention of storm water runoff and drainage. Agreed with staff-recommended public improvements
5. One Commissioner would like to see more green space and was concerned with the third story space and bulk; preferred a two story configuration and less parking.
6. The consensus of the Commission was that neighborhood compatibility is important. The Commission suggested more, smaller buildings, perhaps clustered, more fenestration, lower height, and breaking up the massing.

7. One Commissioner was concerned with the amount of parking and the parking design; would like to see less parking rather than more. Would like to see more usable open space to help fit in with the neighborhood created particularly for the property users. Identified the corner on Cieneguitas Road and Foothill Road as a good start in providing open space and suggested that it be made more functional. Another Commissioner suggested providing parking under the building to allow for usable park-like open space.
8. One Commissioner felt that this proposal reflected thinking from the last decade and identified the site as a gateway to Santa Barbara; was disappointed that the proposal does not feel like you are entering Santa Barbara. Did not see that this was the correct site for what was being proposed. Recommended performing a LEED site analysis and incorporating more sustainable design.
9. Two Commissioners felt that this project deviated from the direction that Plan Santa Barbara was moving toward. This project would not add new business to Santa Barbara, but only relocate two existing businesses from the downtown area to the suburbs. Acknowledged that there would not be control over what tenants would occupy the buildings. Recommended a more campus-like setting with consideration of usable open space. Agreed with the prior concept review minutes and recommended that the prior comments be addressed.
10. One Commissioner appreciated the use of solar panels.
11. One Commissioner was not convinced that a neighborhood market was not a viable option considering the recent growth in the area and the proposed use, and suggested reconsideration of a neighborhood market.
12. Two Commissioners suggested taking the most intense part of the development and moving it close to Foothill and Highway 154 to distance it from existing residential development and open up the site. Also, suggested orienting the buildings to take full advantage of the southern exposure in the northwest corner of the site. Still would like to see smaller buildings and perhaps more buildings. Suggested working with elevation change to provide tuck-under parking and consider double stack parking or parking under the buildings.

Chelsey Swanson, Associate Transportation Planner, responded to the Commission's questions regarding the 2002 traffic study and cumulative traffic impacts on the two County intersections and the intersection of Cieneguitas and Foothill Roads. Intersections identified in the 2002 study and additional intersections could be impacted by the project, but impacts would not be known until a new study is conducted.

Mr. Towbes acknowledged that the new traffic signal being put on the corner of Cieneguitas Road and Foothill Road will make a significant difference in improving circulation. Stated that a new Traffic Study will be conducted. Stated that underground parking could not be justified economically and expressed concern with seeking permission from Exxon to provide underground parking. Stated challenges with providing smaller buildings including additional requirements for elevators and bathrooms.

Mr. Towbes thanked the Commission for the dialogue and comments shared.

Mr. Kato asked the Commission to clarify what would be needed for more neighborhood compatibility. Two Commissioners stated that a lower massing and sublevel parking would help make the project more compatible.

Chair Myers called for a recess at 2:33 P.M. and reconvened at 2:42 P.M.

III. ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA

ACTUAL TIME: 2:42 P.M.

1. Committee and Liaison Reports.

None were given.

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

Commissioner White reported on the Staff Hearing Officer meeting held on December 4, 2008. Four items were heard with one being continued.

3. Action on the review and consideration of the following Planning Commission Resolutions and Minutes:

a. Draft Minutes of November 6, 2008

b. Draft Minutes of November 13, 2008

c. Resolution 039-08

Recommendations to City Council on *General Plan Framework: Revised Draft Policy Preferences Report*

d. Draft Minutes of November 20, 2008

e. Resolution 040-08

1242 Shoreline Drive

MOTION: Jostes/Thompson Approve the minutes and resolutions as edited.

This motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 5 Noes: 0 Abstain: As noted. Absent: 2 (Jacobs, Larson)

Commissioner Myers abstained from the minutes of November 13, 2008.

Commissioner Jostes abstained from the minutes of November 20, 2008.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Myers adjourned the meeting at 2:52 P.M.

Submitted by,



Gabriela Feliciano, Commission Secretary on behalf of
Julie Rodriguez, Planning Commission Secretary