

MINUTES

REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

MARCH 19, 2001

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Rolling Hills Estates was called to order at 7:35 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers, 4045 Palos Verdes Drive North, by VICE-CHAIR BAYER.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

VICE-CHAIR BAYER led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

3. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Vullo, Zerunyan, Conway, Vice-Chair Bayer

Commissioners Absent: Somers, Goyette

Staff Present: Director Orci

Senior Planner Wahba

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

COMMISSIONER CONWAY moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER ZERUNYAN,

TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING OF MARCH 5, 2001.

There being no objection, VICE-CHAIR BAYER so ordered.

5. AUDIENCE ITEMS

None.

6. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. WAIVE READING IN FULL ALL RESOLUTIONS THAT ARE PRESENTED FOR PLANNING COMMISSION CONSIDERATION ON TONIGHT'S AGENDA AND ALL SUCH RESOLUTIONS SHALL BE READ BY TITLE ONLY.

7. BUSINESS ITEMS

None.

8. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. PLANNING APPLICATION NO. 39-00. APPLICANT: METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT; LOCATION: NORTHEAST CORNER OF CREST ROAD AND

HAWTHORNE BLVD.; A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR A MIXED-USE PROJECT IN THE C-L ZONE; A PRECISE PLAN OF DESIGN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF 37 SINGLE FAMILY HOMES WITH A 750 SQ. FT. COMMERCIAL BUILDING; AND A GRADING PERMIT TO EXPORT APPROXIMATELY 5,500 CUBIC YARDS OF EARTH.

Senior Wahba gave a staff report and stated that the Council referred the project back to the Planning Commission, with the direction to consider the inclusion of additional open space and increased separation of housing from the major arterials (Hawthorne Boulevard and Crest Road) in the proposed development.

He further stated that some late correspondence has been received from Mr. and Mrs. Eric Schott and correspondence from the applicant along with a revised site plan, addressing the concerns outlined in the staff report.

He reviewed the revised plans and stated that the street widths have been reduced to 28 feet in width, the on street parking has been removed and off street parking bays have been installed, the entrance from Crest Road has been closed, the retaining wall on Crest Road has been eliminated and the homes have been pulled back from Crest Road and Hawthorne Boulevard, and the corner unit at Hawthorne Boulevard and Crest Road has been eliminated. He pointed out that most of the changes to the project have occurred along the perimeter of the project. He said the commercial site still remains the same at 750 square feet, and the grading plan is essentially the same, involving 5500 cubic yards of export from the site. He also said that lot coverage has been reduced and landscaping has increased by 10 percent. He indicated that the architectural styles and square footage remains the same. He stated that the roof line of the "A" Plan is proposed to be lowered over the living rooms to a single story element which would help throughout the project reduce the mass of the "A" units. He also said that a small porch has been added off the living room/den on the front elevations of the "A" and "C" Plans. He stated that the applicant is working on the 3-D drawings of the project.

He stated that the Fire Department endorsed the street width with no on street parking and has recommended that for every 3 units, there be at least 1 guest parking space.

He further reviewed the impacts from the Crest Road driveway closure and stated that the outbound traffic from the site is required to turn right only onto Hawthorne Boulevard. He said that the applicant has contacted the City of Rancho Palos Verdes to determine if the median could be modified to allow exiting traffic from the project to turn left onto Hawthorne Boulevard.

He reviewed the remaining issues and alternatives such as redesigning the driveways for Units 1, 7 and 25 to at least 18 feet in depth or adding additional private parking spaces for these units; adding more guest parking spaces; moving Units 27 and 38 closer together, so that the rear yard fences can be moved in from the street to comply with the corner cutoffs; and at least a 4-foot wide walkway be provided along at least one side of the guest parking spaces for easier access to the main walkway to Crest Road.

He indicated that staff is waiting to receive the revised initial study in order to assess the project's impacts, that the Resolution be revised based on the Planning Commission's input, and that 36-inch box trees along the perimeter of the project be

provided with the Parks and Activities Commission reviewing the landscape plan.

He stated that staff recommends that the Planning Commission:

1. Open the Public Hearing;
2. Take Public Testimony;
3. Discuss the issues; and
4. Continue the Public Hearing to the next meeting of April 2, 2001; and direct the applicant to revise their plans as summarized in the staff report.

In response to COMMISSIONER CONWAY, Senior Planner Wahba stated that the definition of open space would depend on the zoning requirements of the particular site or neighborhood. He noted that the applicant has provided a project comparison in the staff report. He stated there would be just over 75% of open space based on the lot coverage being just under 25%.

Director Orci pointed out that any man-made materials including gravel and driveways in a residential zone are counted toward lot coverage, with the balance considered as open space.

In response to COMMISSIONER CONWAY, Senior Planner Wahba explained that the lot coverage has been reduced from 25% to 24.2%, and the landscaping has been increased from 39% to 49%; with the proposed patios, the landscaping would be at 46%.

In response to COMMISSIONER CONWAY, Senior Planner Wahba informed that the increased setbacks along Crest Road and Hawthorne Boulevard were a result from the narrowing of the streets.

COMMISSIONER CONWAY requested background information on the committee that previously reviewed the project relative to the land use. He requested a better understanding of how the concept of zero-lot line arose and to what degree it received support.

In response to COMMISSIONER CONWAY, Senior Planner Wahba stated that the traffic study for the access roadway would be a condition of approval and that the applicant work with the City of Rancho Palos Verdes. He also indicated that it is not anticipated that the results of the traffic study would impact the negative declaration. He believed that most of the traffic would be going out northbound onto Hawthorne Boulevard.

Director Orci stated that in terms of health and safety issues, there will be no impact with the single access point, but there may be some impacts with queuing and potential conflicts with the left turn pocket on Hawthorne Boulevard.

In response to COMMISSIONER CONWAY, Director Orci explained that guest parking spacing is not addressed in the Code in terms of location. He said it was the Fire Department's desire to evenly space or distribute the guest parking spaces to prevent or minimize parking on the street.

In response to COMMISSIONER CONWAY, Senior Planner Wahba stated that the revised plans presented this evening by the applicant show 19 guest parking spaces.

Director Orci explained that open space is defined differently between residentially zoned projects and commercially zoned projects. He said that in commercial projects, the concentration is on landscaping and its distribution, concentrating a certain amount throughout the parking lot.

In response to COMMISSIONER CONWAY, Director Orci believed that the City Council requested that the applicant make more contributions toward the 70 percent open space as required in an RPD zoning district.

In response to COMMISSIONER ZERUNYAN, Director Orci explained that the applicant does have some requirements to comply with when it comes to open space and landscaping; however, the definitions are different when applied to an exclusively zoned residential development.

Director Orci suggested providing a summary of commercial zone versus residential zone lot coverage and landscaping definitions.

In response to COMMISSIONER VULLO, Senior Planner Wahba stated that the project design uses a zero-lot line concept, with each home being separated with the wall of the unit on the property line, with no or limited windows to maintain the privacy of the yard immediately adjacent.

In response to COMMISSIONER VULLO, Director Orci indicated that subterranean parking was considered previously in a higher density design.

In response to VICE-CHAIR BAYER, Senior Planner Wahba explained that there are only two pedestrian walkways, one onto Hawthorne Boulevard and the other onto Crest Road.

In response to VICE-CHAIR BAYER, Senior Planner Wahba stated that there are three homes that have the 9-foot deep driveway.

COMMISSIONER CONWAY moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER VULLO,

to OPEN THE PUBLIC HEARING.

AYES: Vullo, Zerunyan, Conway, Vice-Chair Bayer

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Somers, Goyette

Rex Swanson, President of Metropolitan Development, stated that the common open spaces have been increased, the streets have been narrowed and the visual separation from Hawthorne Boulevard and Crest Road has been improved. He stated that the total site landscaping has been increased 26.7% and dedicated common open space has increased 300%. He indicated that the building setbacks along

Hawthorne Boulevard and Crest Road have increased 14% and 45% respectively and all the retaining walls on Hawthorne Boulevard and Crest Road have been eliminated except for Lots 15 and 16 which are below grade. He also said the 36-inch box trees will be 15 feet in height at planting.

He indicated that the three units that have 9-foot deep driveways would have a private space immediately adjacent with the same pavers as used in the driveway. Also, two additional guest parking spaces have been added, one adjacent to parking space 14 and one between Units 8 and 9, with a total of 16 guest spaces which is 23% over the Code. He also said the rear yards of Units 27 and 38 are proposed to be reduced by relocating the fence. He pointed out that the pedestrian walkway to Crest Road has been revised to 4 feet, and the retaining wall for Units 31 and 35 will be integrated into the buildings.

He believed that there would not be a problem with having the only entrance/exit onto Hawthorne Boulevard, as the traffic generation is very low from the development. Also, it was suggested by the Traffic Engineer of Rancho Palos Verdes that the left turn pocket out of the development could be shortened.

COMMISSIONER VULLO suggested that a left-hand turn lane be installed going east on Crest Road which would allow easier accessibility and safety in and out of the complex. He would like to see information in the traffic study regarding closing off Crest Road and having the only access off of Hawthorne Boulevard.

Mr. Swanson stated that by having one way in and out of the complex would make a superior development and create a substantial amount of open space with pedestrian connections for the use of the existing business in the Ralph's Center.

In response to COMMISSIONER VULLO, Mr. Swanson stated that by closing off the Hawthorne Boulevard access and using only the Crest Road access would create traffic through the neighborhood to access the commercial building.

Robert Beck, 46 Encanto Drive, Rolling Hills Estates, indicated that the focus of the original subcommittees that looked at proposals to change the usage on the site was to just to hear proposals and to change the use from an all commercial site to a residential site. He said that the overall lot coverage has decreased by approximately 1500 square feet, and that the revised site plan has been submitted, meeting all of the conditions and suggestions by staff. He also believed that the direction from City Council was greater open space and increased separation with more landscaped open space, and that landscaped open space has increased to 49% with the patios and 46% without the patios. Also, the dedicated common open space has been increased to .24 acres which does not include the calculation of the commercial site. He further informed that the setbacks from Hawthorne Boulevard and Crest Road have been increased significantly with more plants and landscaping added. He said all the driveways and private spaces will have pavers, which would allow a distinction between private parking spaces and guest parking spaces. He pointed out that the corner unit on Hawthorne Boulevard and Crest Road was removed, and a pedestrian pathway in that location would be unsafe due to the grade.

In response to COMMISSIONER CONWAY, Mr. Swanson believed that the majority of City Council's concerns were open space, not density.

VICE-CHAIR BAYER pointed out that the direction from City Council was to reduce the number of homes to make the area less dense, decrease the sea of roofs concept and increase the open space.

Mr. Swanson stated that a view analysis has been completed which reveals that a sea of roofs would not be visualized. He indicated that they are having perspective drawings prepared, selecting a view that picks up the maximum number of roofs. He believed that the sea of roofs concept would not be an issue.

Eric Schott, 22 Cresta Verde, indicated that the visual separation has improved. He expressed concern with obtaining the appropriate landscaping, parking impacts on their streets, and the safety of the access out of the project onto Hawthorne Boulevard.

Howard Burke stated that the project is needed in the community, but he expressed concern with walls without windows and the energy efficiency of the homes.

Ray Destabelle, 51 Cresta Verde, expressed concern with parking and traffic, and traffic circulation out to Hawthorne Boulevard.

Frank Sesno, 97 Cresta Verde, believed that the project needs major changes and expressed concern with a cookie cutter development and zero-lot line and sea of roof concepts. He believed that the project should be in keeping with a rural atmosphere of the City. He said that the roofs will be visualized and would be similar to the Sea Breeze development going along Crest Road.

COMMISSIONER VULLO commented that he would like to see a 3-D model of the project presented.

Mr. Swanson stated that they will be presenting an interior perspective, a perspective from the across the street looking at the key corner of Crest Road and Hawthorne Boulevard, and an angle across the site from the Cresta Palos Verdes view. He said this would be the best possible way to demonstrate the character of the neighborhood as proposed.

Jeff Lee, President of the Lee Group, invited those interested to visit their website at leehomes.net. He said that they specialize in urban and fill development in established communities where neighbors are on all four sides, and that they have been selected by cities to do their first residential redevelopment projects. He indicated that the project compared to other developments is much lower in density with three architectural styles and multiple elevations and larger setbacks and rear yards. He said their revised site plan shows the units on Hawthorne Boulevard set back 40 feet from the back of the sidewalk and on Crest Road the majority of the units are set back over 32 feet from the back of the sidewalk. Also, there are many areas where there is in excess of 20-foot separations between buildings. He said the development will not be a cookie cutter development, and the neighborhood will be unique. Also, the trees will be large upon planting. He informed that the Lee Group is one of the forerunners in energy efficient home development in the United States, and they are dedicated to quality and continue to be invited back by cities where they have done work previously. He believed that they can work together with the Planning Commission, City Council and staff to provide a quality development that the people

of Rolling Hills Estates will be proud of.

In response to COMMISSIONER VULLO, Mr. Lee informed that the ceiling over the living room of the "A" Plan was lowered to a one-and-a-quarter story ceiling to meet the wedding cake approach. He also said that they will be developing a mix of hips and gables to give architectural relief. He also said more windows will be added on the zero-lot line side. He pointed out that zero-lot lines will provide a larger usable side yard.

Mr. Beck believed that the City Council's direction was to create more open space and greater separation and not to necessarily remove units. He said that they have accomplished the direction of the City Council, and he asked that the Planning Commission close the Public Hearing, deliberate, allow staff to look at the revised plans along with the drawings on the preliminary landscape plan and bring this matter back on April 2, 2001 with any further comments and revised conditions of approval.

VICE-CHAIR BAYER expressed concern with the density of the project, and lack of open space, walking paths and feeling of green and community. She pointed out that the Master Plan of Rolling Hills Estates is a rural community, and this project needs to be looked at very carefully. She would like to see more of an effort to opening up the area creating more open space or a less dense appearance, seeing fewer homes.

COMMISSIONER VULLO expressed concern with the access off of Hawthorne Boulevard and safety issues. He said the development of the lot is an improvement from what is there currently, but he also believed that a 3-D model will help visualize the density of the project.

COMMISSIONER ZERUNYAN stated that the project is very unique and will add to the corner of Hawthorne Boulevard and Crest Road and will be a great entry to the City. He said he supports the project and appreciated the project being provided with more greenspace and opened space. He also pointed out that Hawthorne Boulevard and Crest Road are not neighborhood streets and are thoroughfares with traffic and should not be directly accessed with pedestrian traffic. He said he is in support of the project.

In response to COMMISSIONER CONWAY, COMMISSIONER ZERUNYAN indicated that the site is unique due to its location and will make a nice entryway into the City and build on an undeveloped corner. He also said the project is unique in that it is needed in the City regarding affordability and opportunities for buyers.

VICE-CHAIR BAYER pointed out that the project is unique in that it is a combination of residential, commercial and RPD, creating its own character.

COMMISSIONER CONWAY moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER VULLO,
to CONTINUE THE PUBLIC HEARING TO THE NEXT MEETING OF APRIL 2, 2001.

AYES: Vullo, Zerunyan, Conway, Vice-Chair Bayer

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: Somers, Goyette

9. COMMISSION ITEMS

The COMMISSION announced the Monterey Conference and discussed transportation plans.

10. UPCOMING PLANNING COMMISSION ITEMS (April 2, 2001)

Director Orci announced the Metropolitan project, a logo for Tommy Hillfilger and a second-story improvement.

11. DIRECTOR'S ITEMS

None.

12. MATTERS OF INFORMATION

- a. Park and Activities Minutes, March 6, 2001.
- b. City Council Actions, March 13, 2001.

COMMISSIONER CONWAY moved, seconded by COMMISSIONER ZERUNYAN,
TO RECEIVE AND FILE ITEMS 12A AND 12B.

There being no objection, VICE-CHAIR BAYER so ordered.

13. ADJOURNMENT

At 10:07 p.m. VICE-CHAIR BAYER adjourned the Planning Commission meeting to the regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting of April 2, 2001 at 7:30 p.m.

Diane Cleary EPA Douglas R. Prichard

Minutes Secretary City Clerk