

**MINUTES OF THE ADJOURNED REGULAR STUDY SESSION
OF THE CITY OF SAN CLEMENTE
PLANNING COMMISSION
August 10, 2015 @ 5:00 p.m.
Community Development Department
Conference Room A
910 Calle Negocio
San Clemente, CA 92673**

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Ruehlin called the Adjourned Regular Study Session of the Planning Commission of the City of San Clemente to order at 5:07 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Michael Blackwell, Wayne Eggleston, and Zhen Wu; Chair pro tem Barton Crandell and Vice Chair Jim Ruehlin

Commissioners Absent: Michael Smith and Chair Donald Brown

Staff Present: Jim Pechous, City Planner
Christopher Wright, Associate Planner
Alex Hunt, Planning Intern
Jeremy Loh, Planning Intern
Cecilia Gallardo-Daly, Community Development Director
Eileen White, Recording Secretary

For the record, Chair Brown did not attend the meeting because he has to recuse himself from considering the one item on this agenda due to property ownership nearby.

INTRODUCTION: MU3.2 STANDARDS

Christopher Wright, Associate Planner, displayed informational charts indicating existing standards, building height measurement options, sample site plans on sloping lots, and photos of existing structures. He displayed photographs to illustrate the subject properties including aerial views, property statistics, topography map, view segments, elevation sections, photographs of the subject lots, and elevations of buildings on sloped lots. Staff recommended the Commission discuss the issues and provide direction to staff.

Alex Hunt, Planning Intern, displayed videos taken from the I-5 Freeway looking westward and provided detailed study of each unique view segment.

Jim Pechous, City Planner, pointed out that as the video illustrates, the most noticeable blockages to the ocean are the vegetation and trees along the side of the road that are

owned and maintained by Caltrans. He noted that at some point Caltrans may decide to enlarge the freeway, and/or remove or plant additional landscaping that could enhance or negatively affect views.

City Planner Pechous reviewed photos of existing mixed use projects in nearby cities of Oceanside, Carlsbad, and Encinitas featuring shared parking, live/work units, storage areas, bus stops, multi-family residential, single family residential, and commercial and service oriented businesses.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Nick Buchanan, resident, commented that increased density is needed in order to multi-model structures to be successful in order to ensure the commercial uses are patronized; noted additional housing is needed in this area as San Clemente ears build-out; commented that the residential portion of mixed use generates funds to pay the high costs of underground parking, site clean-up, and providing commercial opportunities; advised that providing less than 9 foot ceilings for residential rather than the existing buyer's preference of 10 foot ceilings will affect the project quality and marketability; Noted the high expense of providing simulated view analyses; encouraged the Commission to keep in mind the goals of the General Plan for this area as they deliberate.

Michael Luna, resident, commented that the ability to provide housing as well as commercial uses enable projects to be economically feasible and successful; opined that higher density, and mixed use projects encourage the pedestrian experience; provided a PowerPoint Presentation illustrating minimum heights to provide ceiling heights necessary and/or preferred by both commercial and residential users, as well as articulated roof to reflect Spanish style, and provide the necessary separate commercial and residential parking. Additionally, he addressed landscaping to screen the additional half story side view necessary in order to provide two parking levels.

DISCUSSION

During discussion the Commissioners, either individually or in agreement, provided the following commentary:

- Commented that currently there are a variety of uses on the subject lots, not just vacant lots and dilapidated buildings.
- Requested staff provide the heights of existing buildings on the subject lots, including structures identified in the key view segments.
- Commented that it is not necessary for the public passing by on the freeway to have perfect views; broad vistas to the ocean give drivers passing by the sense and feel that is unique to San Clemente.
- Stated that the General Plan envisions vitality and pedestrian interaction for this area, and the Zoning designation revisions were made to that end. Desire for ocean vistas from the freeway for the benefit of the public should not be placed above the wants of City residents.

- Suggested the most successful mixed use projects feature magnet commercial uses strategically placed, with small businesses in between, to encourage foot traffic between the uses. Magnet commercial uses are necessary to bring customers in from outside the area as there is not enough population in the south end of town to fully support commercial uses.
- Suggested that there is enough population in the south end to support certain commercial uses, as evidenced by the Ralph's Grocery Store, Tommy's Restaurant, and other successful uses.
- Due to the amount of lower rent properties, it may be difficult for new development, which will have higher rents, to compete for tenants.
- Commented that in order to change from the existing situation to a vibrant commercial area, it's necessary for the City to encourage and provide opportunities for building/development the area.
- Suggested a road diet study may identify methods to slow down traffic, including the addition of bike lanes, etc.
- Commented that South El Camino Real becomes jammed with traffic when the freeway is jammed; reducing to one lane in each direction is not in the plans.
- Opined it is necessary to provide for parking, including potential for the City to purchase property to provide parking, in order to attract retail/restaurant uses without impacting residential parking.
- Expressed desire to improve the appearance of alleys and encourage use by pedestrians, and cyclists; noted importance of providing flexibility of design in order to encourage side street traffic entry to reduce vehicular traffic in the alleys.
- Stated preference to allow lower height limits and a Conditional Use Permit to approve additional height in unique circumstances.
- Suggested a wider sidewalk on El Camino Real would be nicer for pedestrians and make retail more successful.
- Commented that parking off the side street results in less traffic using the alleys which is better for existing residents.
- Commented that encouraging mixed use in these lots with flexible standards to encourage diversity and articulation follows the recommendation of the Architectural Guild and other sources as well as follows direction of the General Plan to encourage revitalization of the area.
- Expressed preference to allow 35 feet max at this point in time, with option to revise the Zoning Ordinance in the future if it is determined that the extra height is significantly affecting views, in order to reward those first few developers taking risks and starting the revitalization of the area.
- Recommended that roof planes parallel to El Camino Real should be avoided in order to keep massing down, with no plane wider than 30 foot across without a break.
- Expressed preference to allow the extra height in order to encourage diversity and flexibility of design rather than prohibiting the extra height in order to retain insignificant views for 13% of traffic.
- Requested staff develop findings for discretionary approval that would allow the heights to go up to 35 feet, and include factors such as view impacts,

neighborhood character and compatibility, consistency with design standards, consistency with General Plan, etc.

STRAW VOTES

Development Standard Options

On a vote of 3-2, with Chair pro tem Crandell and Vice Chair Ruehlin opposed, the Commission directed staff to establish a 28 ft PL 33 TOR height, with CUP to allow side-street garage with maximum height of 30 ft PL and 35 TOR and add design guideline to encourage roof ridgelines perpendicular to ECR.

Chair pro tem Crandell and Vice Chair Ruehlin voiced a preference for option a.ii, a 30 ft PL 35 TOR, with guideline to limit height to 28 ft PL 33 TOR when less height is needed for side-street garage and/or to avoid significant impacts to freeway ocean views.

Heights off Alley

On a 5-0 vote, the Commission directed staff to establish that height above 28 feet shall be set back a minimum of 13 feet from the rear of the property for heights higher than 28 feet above the alley with guideline for varied setbacks along the alley.

Additional Issues for Consideration

The Commission decided that no guideline was necessary for heights in the middle of the lot; requested staff bring back existing language for the downtown area for consideration to determine commercial percentages; elected to keep as is the previous consensus items on parking standards, urban open area and storage.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

COMMISSION COMMENT

Commissioner Wu announced he will not be present at the Commission's next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

IT WAS MOVED BY CHAIR PRO TEM CRANDELL, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER EGGLESTON, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED to adjourn at 9:24 p.m. to a Regular Study Session to be held at 6:00 p.m. on August 19, 2015 in Council Chambers at City Hall located at 100 Avenida Presidio, San Clemente, CA.

Respectfully submitted,



Jim Ruehlin, Vice Chair

Attest:



Jim Pechous, City Planner