

**MINUTES OF THE  
REGULAR STUDY SESSION  
OF THE CITY OF SAN CLEMENTE  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
April 7, 2021 @ 6:00 p.m.  
Teleconference Only via  
www.san-clemente.org/live or Cox Channel 854**

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**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Ruehlin called the Regular Meeting of the Study Session of the Planning Commission of the City of San Clemente to order at 6:03 p.m. The meeting was offered teleconference only due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, and available to the public via live stream from the City's YouTube Channel or live on Cox Channel 854.

**ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present: Donald Brown; Chair pro tem Zhen Wu, Vice Chair Michael Blackwell, Chair Jim Ruehlin (All Planning Commissioners participated via teleconference)

Commissioners Absent: Barton Crandell, Chris Kuczynski

Staff Present: \*Gabriel J. Perez, City Planner  
\*Christopher Wright, Associate Planner II  
\*Eileen White, Recording Secretary

\*Participated in the meeting via teleconference

**AGENDA**

A. South El Camino Real Focus Area Standards – 3<sup>rd</sup> Session – (Perez/Wright/Webber)

This third study session will provide an overview of development standards for the South El Camino Real (West of Interstate-5) General Plan Focus Area that includes the Mixed Use 3.2 Zone (MU 3.2 Zone). The Planning Commission requested an assessment to ensure the standards can fulfill City goals for the area and to identify potential development constraints.

Christopher Wright, Associate Planner II, narrated a PowerPoint Presentation entitled, "Planning Commission Study Session 3, El Camino Real Focus Area, dated April 7, 2021." A copy of the Presentation is on file in Planning Division. City Planner Perez clarified that Planning staff conducted additional research on the State Housing Accountability Act and determined that staff would immediately

apply the net lot area standard for residential yield in mixed use zones rather than the gross lot area for consistency with the General Plan residential density allowances, as required by State law.

Chair Ruehlin opened the public hearing, confirmed with City Planner Perez that no public hearing testimony had been submitted, and closed the public hearing.

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

- Stated preference to use net area calculations rather than gross area for determining residential count and density for mixed-use projects; remove the option for gross area in order to eliminate ambiguities.
- Supported lowering the level of review from the City Council to the Planning Commission for Conditional Use Permits to increase the MU 3.2 Zone height ceiling from 33 to 35 feet above El Camino Real in an effort to reduce processing time and costs for applicants.
- Suggested reduction of required retail percentages or offer relief on parking requirements on mixed-use projects.
- Stated preference for the FAR approach; suggested rather than focus on height, the scale and envelope of the project overall should also be a consideration in order to avoid canyonization; suggested eliminating units per acre measurements.
- Supported keeping the height evaluation at the Planning Commission level; with guidelines in place, the parties will have ability to negotiate and discretion to exchange/barter for other features.
- Called for greater research to expand parking flexibility.
- Suggested canyonization should continue to be addressed at the Design Review Subcommittee (DRSC) level before the project reaches the Planning Commission level.
- Suggested some strategies to continue with commercial space, yet allow applicants ability to increase the more profitable residential portion would be to wave some of the parking requirements for commercial space, allow on street parking, and/or use FAR to guide density standards.

**IT WAS MOVED BY CHAIR RUEHLIN, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER BROWN AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO RECOMMEND THE CITY COUNCIL TO DIRECT STAFF TO INITIATE ZONING AMENDMENTS THAT CHANGE STANDARDS IN THE MIXED USE 3.2 ZONE AS FOLLOWS:**

- 1) Changes to the minimum commercial .35 Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and parking standards that support a mix of residential and retail while fulfilling MU 3.2 Zone.
- 2) Make the Planning Commission the assigned review authority for the review and approval of Conditional Use Permit requests to increase the height

ceiling for projects in the zone, as opposed to the City Council being the review authority.

- 3) Directing staff to research alternatives to required parking standards to further goals for the zone.
- 4) For residential density, clarify that the “net acre” standard is used versus “gross acre” for mixed-use projects, except for special circumstances as intended.

**COMMISSION COMMENT**

None

**RECESS**

The Commission recessed until the start of the regular session.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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Jim Ruehlin, Chair

Attest:

  
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Gabriel J. Perez, City Planner