

April 27, 2021

**CITY OF GARDENA
PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSION
MINUTES**

TUESDAY, March 2, 2021, MEETING
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM

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Called to order by Vice Chair Sherman at 7:02 P.M.

ROLL CALL

Present:	Dale Pierce, Stephen Langley, Steve Sherman
Absent:	Deryl Henderson, Brenda Jackson
Also in Attendance:	Gregg McClain, Interim Community Development Director
	Lisa Kranitz, Assistant City Attorney
	John F. Signo, AICP, Senior Planner
	Amanda Acuna, Senior Planner

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Commissioner Langley and seconded by Commissioner Sherman to approve the minutes of the meeting on February 16, 2021. The minutes were approved 3-0-2.

Ayes:	Langley, Sherman, Pierce
Noes:	None
Absent:	Henderson, Jackson

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Agenda Item #4

Senior Planner Amanda Acuna addressed the Commission and public on procedures for conducting the online meeting since all participants were attending from a remote location. Instructions on how to comment and ask questions via the Zoom application was given.

There were no oral communications from the public.

PUBLIC HEARING

Agenda Item #5(A)

Environmental Assessment #14-20 and Conditional Use Permit #4-20

This item will be re-noticed. There was no discussion.

Agenda Item #5(B)

Environmental Assessment #17-20, Zone Change #5-20, and associated General Plan Amendment

This item was removed by staff. There was no discussion.

Agenda Item #5(C)

Environmental Assessment #9-20, Site Plan Review #4-20, Zone Change #4-20, General Plan Amendment #5-20, Tentative Tract Map #3-20, Variance #2-20

A request for a Site Plan Review to allow the development of six detached condominium townhomes; a Zone Change changing the zoning from R-1/R-3 (Single-Family and Medium Multi-Family Residential Zone) to R-3 (Medium Density Multiple-Family Residential); a General Plan Amendment changing the land use designation from Low/Medium Residential to Medium Density Residential; a Tentative Tract Map to subdivide a 0.34 acre lot for condominium units; and a Variance for a reduced side yard setback, and direction to staff to file a Notice of Exemption.

Project Location: 1031 Magnolia Avenue

Applicant: Steve Stapakis

Senior Planner Acuna gave the staff presentation. She provided background on the property and showed an aerial of the subject property and neighboring properties. She mentioned the subject property is in two zoning districts: R-1 and R-3. She mentioned there are a total of six units: the unit in the front is a three-story detached unit; the units in the middle are three-story attached units; and the unit in the rear is a two-story detached unit. She described the requests for a tentative tract map to subdivide the property into six condominium units, and a variance to reduce the side yard setback. The project requires a General Plan Amendment and Zone Change to make the entire property Medium Residential in the R-3 zone. She mentioned that staff can make affirmative findings for all of the requests, and therefore, the project can be approved. She mentioned the project was found to be exempt from CEQA and was properly noticed in the Gardena Valley News and to owners and occupants within 300 feet of the subject property. She summarized the public correspondences that were received and stated the major issues: traffic and parking impacts, reduced setbacks, a lack of vegetation, and a lack of community outreach.

Vice Chair Sherman asked if the Commission had questions for staff.

Commissioner Langley asked about pictures of the property, particularly from Magnolia Avenue. He asked how the project impacted the single-family neighborhood to the north.

Ms. Acuna stated that the applicant has prepared a visual presentation. She mentioned the single-family zone allows for two stories, which is what is being proposed for the rear unit.

Commissioner Langley asked about the six-foot wall near the sidewalk. He mentioned he has not seen anything like this before. He stated his concerns with all the letters that were received. He asked if we can see what is going on in the rear portion of the property.

Ms. Acuna referred to the elevations in her presentation. She showed which elevations would be seen from the street and from neighboring properties.

Commissioner Pierce stated that the builder has taken into account neighbors' concerns and reduced at least one property down to two levels instead of three. He stated the builder has really accommodated the neighborhood.

Vice Chair Sherman opened the public hearing and called upon the applicant to speak.

George Andrews, applicant's representative, provided a visual presentation. He mentioned why he believes the design works best for the City and the neighborhood. He mentioned the challenges with the split zone and the land-locked R-1 portion; over two-thirds of the lot is zoned R-3. He showed elevations that showed it was important to reduce the mass and height in the rear of the property, which is the most impactful part of the project. He mentioned with the variance and reduction in the side yard, they can make the project as close to R-1 as possible.

Michael Lee, neighbor, stated he is in an R-1 area and the R-3 project is not consistent with the neighborhood. He stated he has not received any type of outreach from the developer. He stated the developer is trying to maximize the area on the property. He stated it would be possible to remove one of the units, expand the remaining units, and eliminate the variance. He mentioned because people hop over fences, the proposed six-foot fence is insufficient.

Neal Natsumeda, 15517 New Hampshire Avenue, stated there have been few development inquiries because the property needs to be developed as R-1. He stated the split zone line has been there for a reason and the project is against 65 years of the City's plan. He stated the R-1 and R-3 line has not been breached. He stated the project should respect the line and it is against the City's plan to change the zone. He stated something like this has not been done before because it cannot be done. He stated we do not know exactly what the project will look like.

Nick Alexandres, 1036 Magnolia Avenue, stated he received the notice from the developer. He stated he is looking to buy a house soon and this is close to what he is looking for. He stated this is what the City needs and is in favor of the project.

Chloe Blue, who lives across the street from the proposed development, stated she is in support of the project. She looked at the plans and felt it resembles homes rather than townhomes, which is what she is looking for.

Enoch Wun, 1035 Magnolia Avenue, stated he is a neighbor and was excited for the project when he heard about it. He stated he appreciates the developer proposing the project because there is enough parking provided. He mentioned that new development would get rid of rodents living on the property.

Hanna Marie, neighbor, stated she received notice of the project and was concerned with the nuisance on the property. She stated this project is a really good idea because the empty lot attracts a lot of rodents. She stated this is what Gardena needs because the architecture is impressive and it is the right idea. She mentioned there is a lot of benefits to this project and it is a good move forward for the community.

Javier Marquez, 15606 S. Berendo Avenue, stated he has concerns with privacy. He stated he appreciates the two-story rear unit, but even with a five-foot setback the property will have a direct view into his property. He stated he agrees with Mr. Lee that the wall should be taller to discourage anyone from jumping it; there has been incidents of that in the past. He stated that sound will inevitably be an issue; it should be addressed. He mentioned they should use a material that blocks sound. He stated he owns the detached garage next to Unit D and there is no wall currently; he would urge a wall that protects that part of the property.

Mr. Andrews rebutted to the neighbor's statements that they would be happy to construct a higher perimeter wall. He would also work to provide improved landscaping. He stated he would rather have a two-story building with less setback than a three-story building with a ten-foot setback.

Vice Chair Sherman asked staff if they can respond to some of the comments.

Ms. Acuna stated that in regards to the rear unit in the R-1 zone, if it were to remain in the R-1 zone a variance would not be required because it would meet the R-1 side yard setback requirement which is 5 feet.

Commissioner Pierce stated he thinks the builder has bent over backwards in order to accommodate the neighborhood. He stated he feels sorry for the neighbors to the north, but it was zoned the way it was zoned and now is the time for change.

Commissioner Sherman stated he looked at the property from the New Hampshire Avenue perspective. He stated he likes the project, but was wondering about fence in the back. He asked if it were possible to put a gate to access New Hampshire Avenue. He stated the rear unit is the one he is most concerned about.

Commissioner Sherman asked the Assistant City Attorney if we could condition or modify the rear portion.

Assistant City Attorney Lisa Kranitz stated that the Commission can continue the meeting or condition the project.

Interim Community Development Director Gregg McClain stated it would be inappropriate to ask the applicant to provide access to New Hampshire Avenue because that would require an easement. He warned the Commission from moving toward that position. He stated a partial wrought iron or similar material may be a better option.

Ms. Kranitz stated in order for the General Plan Amendment to pass, it requires three votes and there are two commissioners missing. She advised to consider a continuance.

Vice Chair Sherman stated he is in favor of a continuance and reopened the public hearing.

Mr. McClain suggested the item be continued to April 6th.

Ms. Kranitz asked if a special meeting on March 30th was possible because there is a large project scheduled for the April 6th meeting which could be time consuming.

Vice Chair Sherman stated he is not available on March 30th.

MOTION: It was moved by Commissioner Langley and seconded by Vice Chair Sherman to continue the item and re-notice the project.

The motion passed by the following roll call vote:

Ayes:	Pierce, Langley, Sherman
Noes:	None
Absent:	Henderson, Jackson

Agenda Item #6

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. McClain stated he had nothing to report.

April 27, 2021

Agenda Item #7

PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioners had no report.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Sherman adjourned the meeting at 8:23 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. McClain', is written over a horizontal line.

GREGG MCCLAIN, SECRETARY
Planning and Environmental Quality Commission

/S/ STEVE SHERMAN

STEVE SHERMAN, VICE CHAIR
Planning and Environmental Quality Commission