

CITY OF GARDENA
PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSION
MINUTES

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2020, MEETING
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM

* * *

Called to order by Chair Jackson at 7:03 P.M.

ROLL CALL

Present: Steve Sherman, Stephen Langley, Dale Pierce, Deryl Henderson, Brenda Jackson
Absent: None
Also in Attendance: Lisa Kranitz, Assistant City Attorney
Raymond Barragan, Acting Community Development Director
John F. Signo, AICP, Senior Planner
Amanda Acuna, Senior Planner

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Commissioner Sherman and seconded by Commissioner Langley to approve the minutes of the meeting on August 18, 2020. The minutes were approved 4-0-1.

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

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Agenda Item #4

Assistant Planner 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

Environmental Assessment #5-20, Site Plan Review #3-20, Zone Change #2-20, General Plan Amendment #2-20, Tentative Tract Map #2-20 (Evergreen Residential Project)

The applicant is requesting approval of a Site Plan Review to allow the development of 84 three-story attached condominium townhomes in 16 buildings, including two low-income units; a Tentative Tract Map to subdivide 4.23 acres (TTM #83037); a Zone

Change to change the zoning from C-3 (General Commercial) to R-4 (High Density Multiple-Family Residential); and a General Plan Amendment to change the land use designation from General Commercial to High Density Residential. A Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) and Mitigation Monitoring Program (MMP) have been prepared to address the environmental impacts. The Commission will consider the MND and MMP at the same time as it considers all other requests. The Commission will act on the site plan review and tentative tract map and make a recommendation on the General Plan Amendment and Zone Change to the City Council.

Project Location: 13615, 13619, and 13633 Vermont Avenue (APNs: 6115-019-042, 043, 044, and 045)

Applicant: Melia Homes Inc.

Senior Planner Signo gave the staff presentation. Mr. Signo gave a brief presentation of the surrounding area, project site, and proposed project. He indicated the project meets all development standards and required findings for approval. He stated the project was adequately noticed. Mr. Signo read into the record minor changes requested by the applicant regarding Conditions No. TTM 3, BS 30, and BS 31.

Brent Little, representing Melia Homes Inc., gave the applicant's presentation. He mentioned they received feedback from a smaller group to the west when designing the project. They went out to a larger group during COVID times at an outdoor open house at the project site. People asked if an interest list was started for potential buyers. They also asked about construction timing. The applicant took all the comments and designed the project based on the General Plan. They looked at what the General Plan says about residential in the City. They saw a need for homeownership opportunities and saw that the General Plan encouraged the development of affordable housing. The project is designed for for-sale housing and includes two affordable units. They want to build the project so it complements the neighborhood. The project provides for three and four-bedroom units and is consistent with the community's plan.

Commissioner Langley asked about the view of the 26-foot rear yard setback and asked about the location of the streets. The driveway appears to go all the way to the back. He provided positive comments about the play area for kids.

Mr. Little replied stating there is landscaping at the ends of the driveways with Cypress trees. The reason the driveways project out is because of the parking spaces. He mentioned that the recreation area was provided because the market gravitates to those amenities.

Chair Jackson opened the public hearing.

K. Morikawa had questions on urban heating and plant choice. She mentioned it looks like a lot of pavement. She was wondering about the plant types and how the garbage situation was going to be. It appears that trash cans will be stored inside of garages.

Assistant City Attorney Kranitz clarified we would be taking all speakers first and then letting staff and the applicant respond.

Jimmy, who identified as a homeowner to the west, asked how landscaping and runoff would be addressed along the back wall, and about privacy issues.

Mr. Little addressed K. Morikawa's questions first. He stated that plants are near and dear to him and add value to the project. They have considered all portions of the project site for incorporation of landscaping. He stated the mitigated negative declaration (MND)

looks at greenhouse gases (GHG) and a variety of impacts. There have been no findings of significance. They have included a lot of landscaping where they can. They included a lot of larger trees, including 24-inch box trees throughout the project site. Regarding trash collection, the landscape plan shows they will be stored in the garage. In regards to stormwater runoff, they meet Public Works' requirements by having an infiltration dry well that takes water in and lets it slowly infiltrate into the ground. There is an underground vault that lets water drain into it. The City's Public Works Department reviewed the hydrology report and facilities are sized adequately according to that report. Regarding Jimmy's question about privacy with the end units, Mr. Little explained they have three-bedrooms on that side with very narrow windows. Along the third story element there's also a stairwell so from outside it looks like normal height, but in reality they are unviewable from inside.

Chair Jackson asked if there were any more speakers. There being none, she closed the public hearing.

MOTION: It was moved by Commissioner Pierce and seconded by Commissioner Langley to adopt Resolution No. PC 10-20 adopting the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring Program for purposes of the Tentative Tract Map and Site Plan Review and recommending that the City Council adopt the same for the General Plan Amendment and Zone Change; recommending that the City Council adopt the General Plan Amendment and Zone Change; and approving the Tentative Tract Map and Site Plan subject to the Legislative approvals.

The motion passed by the following roll call vote:

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

Agenda Item #6

Environmental Assessment #15-19, Site Plan Review #5-19, Zone Change #1-19, General Plan Amendment #1-19, Tentative Tract Map #3-19, Variance #2-19 (141st and Normandie Townhomes)

The Planning Commission considered a request for site plan review, tentative tract map, and variance to allow the development of 50 three-story attached condominium townhomes; a Zone Change to change the zoning from R-1/R-3 (Single-Family and Medium Multi-Family Residential Zone) to R-4 (High Density Multiple-Family Residential); a General Plan Amendment to change the land use designation from Low/Medium Residential to High Density Residential. A Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) were prepared to address the environmental impacts. The Commission considered the MND and MMRP at the same time as it considers all other requests.

Project Location: 1335, 1337, 1341 and 1343 West 141st Street

Applicant: The Olson Company

Senior Planner Acuna gave the staff presentation. Ms. Acuna discussed the surrounding area, project site, and proposed project. She indicated the project meets all development

standards and required findings for approval, and stated the project was adequately noticed.

Doris Nguyen representing the applicant, The Olson Company, gave a presentation on the proposed project. She mentioned this is The Olson Company's second community in the City. She mentioned that Alliance ranked their company number one for customer service, satisfaction, and ownership experience. Their Champion Program helps them stay involved with their communities long-term. This is because they have a lot of first-time homeowners that have not lived in a homeowners association (HOA). They help them get acquainted with the rules. She mentioned the project site has fallen in somewhat disrepair. They have been through a thorough process to design the proposed project. They provide Spanish architectural style with arched entries and various building materials that make it relate to the pedestrian scale. Along the south part of the project site they will be improving the turning safety and will dedicate seven feet of right-of-way along 141st Street. Since 141st Street has no sidewalk, they will build a sidewalk, curb and gutter, and a landscaped parkway. Along Normandie Avenue, they have an existing driveway that will be repaired. During the process, they received concerns neighbors that include additional cars turning on Normandie Avenue, traffic, and parking. She stated that the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) determined there was no impacts regarding traffic. Regarding parking, each home has an attached two-car garage and guest parking spaces so there are actually more parking spaces than bedrooms. Along the north, they placed the street along the property to increase the setback. They used landscaping to transition from adjacent uses, including providing over 100 trees with some that grow to 30 to 50 feet tall. The landscape architect chose carefully to achieve this transition. The common open space area will have a barbecue, lawn, and seating area. They have done surveys to determine which amenities are most desired. This is because their homes are relatively smaller. She mentioned the proposed project helps the City in meeting its regional housing needs assessment (RHNA).

Bernie and her husband, who identified themselves as residents on 141st Street, had concerns with vehicle through-put. During mornings and afternoons there are large influxes of vehicles at 141st Street. If it is high density, then it will be a problem for residents. There's only one entrance and one exit; that's a big concern if this project is high density.

Ms. Nguyen indicated that typically a high-density project has fewer trips than a single-family project. This part of the City is considered low vehicle miles travelled (VMTs). In terms of existing conditions, it's already an area in the City that is screened with low VMTs so it does not cause a significant impact in regards to CEQA. The project meets Senate Bill (SB) 743 guidelines, not level of service (LOS). The City has guidelines that meets SB 743 regarding VMTs. COVID would not have been an issue with regards to traffic impacts.

Chair Jackson asked if there were any more speakers. There being none, she closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Sherman wanted to know more about the variance request.

Ms. Acuna stated there would be a six-foot-high block wall with tubular steel along Normandie Avenue; it is allowed if it is tubular steel interspersed with block wall. The applicant is requesting a reduction of a five-foot setback down to 14 inches.

Ms. Nguyen elaborated on the reasons for the variance indicating the need to address proper drainage.

Commissioner Langley asked about the project along 141st Street, the wall seems closer than at Normandie Avenue.

Ms. Nguyen indicated there is no wall along 141st Street so you could walk up to their front doors; they only have a short patio wall.

Commissioner Langley thought there was a 20-foot setback requirement and it does not look like 20 feet is provided.

Ms. Kranitz indicated there is no 20-foot setback requirement anymore and 141st Street would be considered a side yard so a 10-foot setback is required.

Commissioner Langley asked with 141st Street would be considered a side yard.

Ms. Acuna explained the narrower side is considered the front so the other side would be considered a side yard.

Resident Bernie asked for a clarification if the setback along 141st Street would be consistent with other homes.

Ms. Acuna explained the neighboring properties may have a 20-foot setback and the proposed project would have a 10-foot setback along 141st Street.

Ms. Kranitz asked if there is not a consistent setback.

Resident Bernie stated there are residents on 141st that have a greater setback.

Ms. Kranitz concurred that some of the homes are required to have a 20-foot setback.

Chair Jackson asked if there were any more speakers. There being none, she closed the public hearing.

MOTION: It was moved by Commissioner Pierce and seconded by Commissioner Henderson to adopt Resolution No. PC 9-20, adopting the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring Program for purposes of the Tentative Tract Map, Site Plan Review and Variance, and recommending that the City Council adopt the same for the General Plan Amendment and Zone Change; recommending that the City Council adopt the General Plan Amendment and Zone Change; and approving the Tentative Tract Map, Site Plan, and Variance subject to the Legislative approvals.

The motion passed by the following roll call vote:

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

Agenda Item #7

Ordinance No. 1821

An ordinance adding Chapter 18.57 to the Gardena Municipal Code allowing low barrier navigation centers in the Mixed-Use Overlay and Commercial Residential zones as a permitted use as required by State law. A low barrier navigation center assists homeless individuals by removing barriers to finding temporary housing. The Ordinance is exempt from CEQA.

Project Location: Citywide

Applicant: City

Assistant City Attorney Kranitz gave the staff presentation. She mentioned the law remains in effect until January 1, 2027. In reviewing the law, staff decided to make it its own section. The Ordinance would allow low barrier navigation centers in mixed use zones and commercial-residential zones. Basically, they would be allowed anywhere there's a mix of uses. This Ordinance is a way to deal with homelessness. This is a way to provide for services and to move people to permanent homes.

Commissioner Langley asked about additional details.

Ms. Kranitz indicated it is meant to get people off the streets and into permanent housing.

Commissioner Langley asked how it impacts Gardena.

Ms. Kranitz indicated it has not, so far, but it does not mean they will not come to Gardena. So far, Gardena is not a place that is attracting these types of developments.

Commissioner Langley asked if these would come before the Planning Commission.

Ms. Kranitz answered it's an allowed use.

Chair Jackson asked if approved by the Planning Commission, would it go to City Council? If someone gets funding, then they can do it.

Ms. Kranitz answered in the affirmative.

Chair Jackson asked why they need to approve this?

Ms. Kranitz stated it is already the law. We are doing this similar to supportive and transitional housing; this is one more type of housing to help move people from the streets into permanent housing.

Chair Jackson opened the public hearing and asked if there were any speakers. There being none, she closed the public hearing.

MOTION: It was moved by Commissioner Henderson and seconded by Commissioner Pierce to adopt Resolution No. PC 11-20 recommending that the City Council approve Ordinance No. 1821.

The motion passed by the following roll call vote:

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

Agenda Item #8

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Acting Community Development Director Raymond Barragan thanked Mr. Signo and Ms. Acuna for all their work. He also thanked and appreciated Ms. Kranitz for committing a lot of time as there was a lot of reading materials in the agenda packet.

Mr. Barragan reminded the Commission that ethics training is around the corner and all commissioners are required to complete it.

Agenda Item #9

PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Pierce acknowledged the Dodgers win.

Commissioner Langley commended Commissioner Pierce's statement. He asked Assistant City Attorney Kranitz about what is required for housing units by 2028.

Ms. Kranitz stated Gardena is assigned 5,721 units. Mr. Signo has been working diligently on an appeal. We don't expect much because the grounds for appeal are limited. Nevertheless, we are going to file an appeal. The City is expected to adopt a new Housing Element and Environmental Justice Element. We have hired consultants and we will bring them to public meetings when they are ready; probably by the beginning of next year. The requirement is that cities have to make sites available. That is what staff is looking at now – how to fit 25% more housing stock into our city. The Housing Element needs to be adopted by October 15, 2021. We will not fail if we can provide the zoning. There is nothing in state law that says we have to provide the housing; we just need to make the land available to developers to have the opportunity to build. Ms. Kranitz indicated she does not know any city that is meeting its RHNA obligation. Projects that receive a permit now get counted towards the current cycle.

Commissioner Langley asked if there are any media covering this.

Ms. Kranitz indicated she is not aware of any. The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) did not address many of the concerns from cities. SCAG does not want to put housing where jobs are not located so they moved housing from the Inland Empire to Los Angeles and Orange counties.

Commissioner Langley asked about the requirement for Torrance.

Ms. Kranitz answered Torrance was allocated 4,928 units. She stated the appeal letter will be provided to all councilmembers.

Commissioner Langley and Chair Jackson expressed their gratitude for Ms. Kranitz' responses.

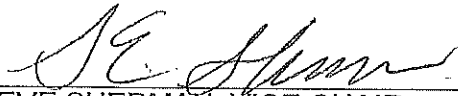
Ms. Kranitz indicated we need to adjourn to the November 17 meeting. There are two items scheduled.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Jackson adjourned the meeting at 9:13 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,


FOR: RAYMOND BARRAGAN, SECRETARY
Planning and Environmental Quality Commission


STEVE SHERMAN, VICE CHAIR
Planning and Environmental Quality Commission