

MINUTES
ADJOURNED
JOINT
CITY COUNCIL
AND
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
DECEMBER 15, 2008

A joint adjourned meeting of the City Council and Planning Commission of the City of Rolling Hills Estates was called to order at 5:37 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, 4045 Palos Verdes Drive North, by MAYOR MITCHELL.

ROLL CALL

City Council Members Present: Addleman, Mitchell, Seamans, Zerunyan, Zuckerman

Planning Commission Members Present: Bayer, Conway, O'Day, Rein, Southwell, Scott

City Staff Present: City Manager Doug Prichard
Planning Director David Wahba
Principal Planner Niki Cutler

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

- A. JOINT CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION WORKSHOP REGARDING PROPOSED MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL/COMMERCIAL PROJECT AT THE PROMENADE ON THE PENINSULA MALL (520, 550 AND 580 DEEP VALLEY DRIVE)

Recommendation: That the City Council/Planning Commission provide comment and direction on the proposed mixed-use residential/commercial project at The Promenade on the Peninsula Mall.

Planning Director Wahba provided a staff report (as per agenda material).

Mark Curcio, Stoltz Management, provided a brief history of their proposed project. He noted that they lowered the scale and height of this project. He noted that they are committed to serving the community as well as offering dining, services, a gathering place, and a residential component that will fit in nicely at this location.

Tim Fleming, Architect, described the "introverted" center and how they are looking to add a residential component to the site. He noted their desire to build a "community within a community" with courtyards and amenities as part of the overall center. He then explained that none of the buildings would be taller than the existing mall, and will have a private area for residential green space. He noted that the total amount they are

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considering is 68 units, and additional retail space with a tower and other architectural elements.

Liz Griggs, General Manager, The Promenade, noted that they went to various community groups in an effort to obtain feedback and received comments such as suggestions to soften the massive walls and bring warmth to the center. She noted that they are currently working on bringing a living room atmosphere outdoors as well as a built-in stage. Additionally, they are looking to find the right balance to improve access and parking in the hopes of bringing vitality and quality to the center.

Mr. Curcio commented that adding a residential component to the center will be attractive to retailers.

COUNCILMAN ADDLEMAN inquired about the possibility of a boutique hotel. Mr. Curcio responded that this option would not be out of the question.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS inquired as to how far apart the two rows of condominiums would be from each other. Mr. Fleming noted that they would be approximately 20 feet.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN noted a number of concerns, including saturation of the marketplace in terms of both commercial space and residential units; the need for additional parking spaces; the undesirability of underground parking; and staging of the construction.

Mr. Curcio noted that a platform would be built and integrated into the building so as not to completely disrupt businesses. He noted that restaurants want good access and visibility from the outside. Additionally, he noted that there are many parking spaces not currently being utilized.

Planning Commissioner Bayer inquired if affordable housing was considered. Mr. Curcio noted that this is still part of the planning process.

Planning Commissioner Bayer inquired into which community groups were involved in the meeting process. Ms. Griggs indicated that they met with the Rancho Palos Verdes' Homeowners' Association, Women's League of Voters, Peninsula Education Foundation, and Peninsula Seniors.

City Manager Prichard informed Stoltz Management that the City had previously undertaken a study to find out how much additional retail would be supported by bringing in a mixed-used component to the commercial district. He noted that the results showed the limited amount of residential envisioned would not produce the critical mass needed to bolster the retail business in the district. He asked Mr. Curcio what he believes would be different from what the previous consultant said in his study and how the residential component in this case would enliven the center.

Mr. Curcio noted that, while he concurs with the study, he would like to create an environment for residents to shop and patronize the restaurants. He noted that this makes restaurants more comfortable in continuing their leases as well as continuing to attract high level businesses and boost retail.

City Manager Prichard asked what is keeping Mr. Curcio from attracting retailers without the residential component. Mr. Curcio restated it is their desire to create an overall lifestyle environment.

Planning Commissioner Conway inquired as to what direction the natural light would be coming from. Mr. Fleming noted that it would come from the courtyard area.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN noted the City's desire to have an uninterrupted pedestrian pathway from Crossfield to the south end of Deep Valley. He referred to the same study that City Manager Prichard mentioned stating that one of the biggest impediments to this project is that this would involve a large parcel being cut up into smaller parcels, whereas future planning efforts would be better served by keeping this site as one parcel.

AUDIENCE ITEMS

Donna Tarr noted that she loves this mall, but noted her concern with more construction. She questioned the funding and if it would run out before the project could be completed. She inquired if the COUNCIL was aware of Stoltz's finances.

Cat Spydell commented that part of the problem is out of town property owners who may not necessarily be familiar with what works in Palos Verdes. She noted that, while this city is a small semi-rural affluent community, it does not need upscale stores because residents do not spend in that way. She noted that many services are missing on the retail side and that there is a "gap" between the people who shop on the Peninsula and those who own properties on the Peninsula.

COUNCILMAN ZERUNYAN thanked Mr. Curcio for their continued support of the community as well as providing for a Sheriff's Department presence there. However, he referred to City Manager Prichard's comments, noting that he does not think additional customers will come from the proposed residential units. He noted his opinion that there are better uses for this site such as a boutique hotel and that there needs to be a balance struck between what the community can absorb and what the property owner needs. Additionally, he noted that he would prefer to see a less dense project at this location.

MAYOR MITCHELL congratulated Stoltz on what they have done for the community, but believed this kind of project is being rushed. She stated that it is too important to the City to retain the retail nature of the commercial-general zone and was concerned that residential use might actually harm the business at the mall. She then noted that this particular project design is of concern because it is stretched along the length of The Promenade and questioned if people would want to live over a retail center and parking garage. She suggested considering having residential concentrated at one end of the center rather than the current design, which as presented would create a tunnel effect that would detract from the shopping experience, thus harming business. She also noted that she concurred with the boutique hotel suggestion. Additionally, she commented that there may be a missed sense of community within the residential component as designed.

COUNCILWOMAN SEAMANS concurred with MAYOR MITCHELL'S remarks. She noted that the lack of natural light and "train car" design are not preferable.

Planning Commissioner Bayer commented that there needs to be a draw for bringing people to the mall and that residential development might not be the best source for that draw. She agreed with Ms. Spydell regarding the need for specific stores that appeal to the public.

Mr. Fleming stated that there needs to be a sense of privacy for the residents. He noted that many of the units will have light coming in from both sides.

COUNCILMAN ZUCKERMAN noted that if the proposed upper level was reduced in the front units and stepped back with terraces overlooking the valley, this would alleviate some of the tunnel effect.

Planning Commissioner Scott commented that the City wants this mall to be successful.

MAYOR MITCHELL thanked everyone for their participation and input.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:20 p.m., MAYOR MITCHELL formally adjourned the City Council meeting to the regular meeting of December 23, 2008 at 7:30 p.m.

Submitted by,

Approved by,

Hope J. Nolan
Deputy City Clerk

Douglas R. Prichard
City Clerk