

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
THE TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Planning Commission convened in a regular session at 7:04 p.m. on Wednesday, October 20, 2004, in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Drevno.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Botello, Drevno, Horwich, LaBouff, and Vice-Chair Uchima.

Absent: Commissioner Faulk and Chairperson Muratsuchi.

Also Present: Planning Manager Isomoto, Planning Assistant Kevin Joe, Building Regulations Administrator Segovia, Fire Marshal Carter, Associate Civil Engineer Symons, Planning Associate Chun and Deputy City Attorney Whitham.

Planning Manager Isomoto relayed requests from Commissioner Faulk and Chairperson Muratsuchi for excused absences.

MOTION: Commissioner Botello, seconded by Commissioner Drevno, moved to grant Commissioner Faulk and Chairperson Muratsuchi excused absences from this meeting; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner Botello, seconded by Commissioner Horwich, moved to accept and file the report of the secretary on the posting of the agenda for this meeting; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Commissioner Horwich moved for the approval of the August 18, 2004 Planning Commission minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Botello, and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Faulk and Chairperson Muratsuchi).

6. REQUESTS FOR POSTPONEMENTS

None.

Vice-Chair Uchima reviewed the policies and procedures of the Planning Commission, including the right to appeal decisions to the City Council.

7. CONTINUED HEARINGS

7A. CUP04-00027, DIV04-00016: RONG-TSUEN CHEN

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow the conversion of an existing residential duplex to a two-unit condominium development and a Division of Lot for condominium purposes on property located in the R-2 Zone at 18324 and 18326 Mansel Avenue.

Recommendation

Approval.

Planning Assistant Kevin Joe introduced the request.

With his daughter Molly Chen translating, Rong-Tsuen Chen voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval.

In response to Commissioner Horwich's inquiry, Planning Manager Isomoto provided clarification of the term "multiple-owner occupied" as used in Torrance Municipal Code Section 91.36.6 (page 15 of staff report), explaining that it does not mean that the condominium units may not be rented, but indicates that each unit is separately owned instead of having one owner for the entire building.

MOTION: Commissioner Drevno, seconded by Commissioner Horwich, moved to close the public hearing; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

MOTION: Commissioner Horwich moved for the approval of CUP04-00027, and DIV04-00016, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Drevno and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Faulk and Chairperson Muratsuchi).

Planning Assistant Joe read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 04-101 and 04-102.

MOTION: Commissioner Horwich moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 04-101 and 04-102. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Drevno and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Faulk and Chairperson Muratsuchi).

7B. PRE04-00016: ONORIO MARSELLA

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow the construction of a new two-story, single-family residence on property located in the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 22638 Gaycrest Avenue.

Recommendation

Approval.

Planning Assistant Kevin Joe introduced the request.

Onorio Marsella, applicant, stated that the proposed residence meets all requirements set forth in the Torrance Municipal Code and complies with the intent of the Hillside Overlay Ordinance. He reported that following the September 15 Commission meeting, he reviewed the plans in an attempt to shave square footage from the project while still meeting his family's needs, and he was able to achieve only minimal reduction. He noted that lots are stair-stepped in this area, which helps to minimize the impact on neighbors, and that the subject lot is unique because it is smaller than 80% of lots in the area. With regard to the floor area ratio (FAR), he explained that if the stairs were not counted twice, the FAR would be .55 and pointed out that the second-floor footprint is only 22% of the lot, leaving 78% as open space. He contended that the proposed project blends well with the neighborhood; noted that no neighbors have complained about it; and urged approval of the project as submitted. He voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval.

Donna Sanderson, 22644 Gaycrest Avenue, voiced support for the project, stating that she believes it will be a great asset to the neighborhood.

Bill Honabach, 22644 Gaycrest Avenue, indicated that he also supports the project, citing the positive impact on property values.

MOTION: Commissioner Horwich, seconded by Commissioner Drevno, moved to close the public hearing; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Commissioner Botello stated that he would not support the project because nothing had been done to address concerns discussed at the previous hearing about the floor area ratio.

Voicing support for the project, Vice-Chair Uchima related his observation that the silhouette is not out of proportion with other homes in neighborhood and there is ample open space.

MOTION: Commissioner Horwich moved for the approval of PRE04-00016, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner LaBouff and passed by a 4-1 roll call vote, with Commissioner Botello dissenting (absent Commissioner Faulk and Chairperson Muratsuchi).

Planning Assistant Joe read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 04-107.

MOTION: Commissioner Horwich moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution No. 04-107. The motion was seconded by Commissioner LaBouff and passed by a 4-1 roll call vote, with Commissioner Botello dissenting (absent Commissioner Faulk and Chairperson Muratsuchi).

Commenting on his vote, Commissioner Horwich stated that the Commission has some discretion with regard to a project's floor area ratio and he felt an FAR in excess of .50 was justified in this case because the subject lot is smaller than many of the lots in the area. Noting that the project complies with all setback requirements, he stated that he did not believe it would have a detrimental impact on the neighborhood.

8. WAIVERS

8A. WAV04-00022: ERIC PORTELLI (TERRI AND GREG CHIODO)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Waiver to allow a reduction of the side yard setback requirement in conjunction with the construction of first and second-story additions to an existing single-family residence on property located in the R-1 Zone at 216 Via La Circula.

Recommendation

Approval.

Planning Assistant Kevin Joe introduced the request.

Eric Portelli, project architect, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval.

In response to Commissioner Botello's inquiry, Mr. Portelli confirmed that the project would not impact the views of any neighbors.

MOTION: Vice-Chair Uchima moved for the approval of WAV04-00022, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner LaBouff and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Faulk and Chairperson Muratsuchi).

Planning Assistant Joe read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 04-122.

MOTION: Vice-Chair Uchima moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution No. 04-122. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Horwich and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Faulk and Chairperson Muratsuchi).

8B. WAV04-00023: MICHAEL AND LAURA MEDINA

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Waiver to allow a reduction of the front yard setback requirement in conjunction with the conversion of a side-facing garage to a front-facing garage for an existing single-family residence on property located in the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 347 Calle de Andalucia.

Recommendation

Approval.

Planning Assistant Kevin Joe introduced the request.

Laura Medina, applicant, voiced her agreement with the recommended conditions of approval.

MOTION: Commissioner Drevno moved for the approval of WAV04-00023, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Horwich and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Faulk and Chairperson Muratsuchi).

Planning Assistant Joe read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 04-123.

MOTION: Commissioner Drevno moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution No. 04-123. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Uchima and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Faulk and Chairperson Muratsuchi).

9. FORMAL HEARINGS

9A. CUP04-00034, DIV04-00020: ECTORIA STRAUGHTER (SUBTEC/ CHERYL VARGO)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow the conversion of an existing three-unit apartment building to a three-unit condominium development and a Division of Lot for condominium purposes on property located in the R-3 Zone at 3540 Redondo Beach Boulevard.

Recommendation

Approval.

Planning Assistant Kevin Joe introduced the request.

Cheryl Vargo, representing the applicant, explained that the proposed project is the mirror image of the one on the adjacent property, which the Commission approved approximately one year ago. She noted that the two property owners have been working together to accomplish the conversions and an easement has been recorded for the shared driveway. She stated that the project will significantly improve the site and reported that the applicant has complied with tenant relocation requirements. She voiced her agreement with the recommended conditions of approval.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Ms. Vargo reported that the adjacent project will be completed in approximately four weeks and that she expects the proposed project to look even better than the one next door because the subject property is in better shape.

MOTION: Commissioner Horwich, seconded by Commissioner Drevno, moved to close the public hearing; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

MOTION: Commissioner Horwich moved for the approval of CUP04-00034 and DIV04-00020, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commission LaBouff and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Faulk and Chairperson Muratsuchi).

Planning Assistant Joe read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 04-124 and 04-125.

MOTION: Commission Horwich moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 04-124 and 04-125. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Drevno and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Faulk and Chairperson Muratsuchi).

**9B. CUP04-00037: SOUTHERN OREGON DEVELOPMENT, LLC
(KEVIN MURRAY)**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow the construction and operation of a drive-through coffee establishment (kiosk) on property located in the Industrial Redevelopment Project Area/ M-1 Zone at 22625 S. Western Avenue.

Recommendation

Approval.

Planning Assistant Kevin Joe introduced the request.

Kevin Murray, representing Southern Oregon Development, LLC, wanted to clarify that the proposed development will take up only approximately 20,000 square feet of the parcel shown on the Location and Zoning Map.

In response to Commissioner Botello's inquiry, Mr. Murray confirmed that a similar project was recently approved on Sepulveda Boulevard, which is expected to be in operation by the end of the year.

Commissioner Botello expressed concerns about the project's impact on the flow of traffic. Mr. Murray noted that the project's design was approved by the Transportation Planning Division.

Tom Dallen, 2616 Martha Avenue, stated that he was concerned that the coffee kiosk would increase cut-through traffic on his street, thereby endangering neighborhood children, and create noise that would interfere with residents' enjoyment of their homes during evening hours and on weekends. He was also concerned that the parking lot would make it easier for criminals to gain access to residential properties to the west, noting that there have been violent incidents across the street on the east side of Western Avenue.

Philip Burnette, 2624 Martha Avenue, echoed concerns that the coffee kiosk would increase cut-through traffic and noise and attract a criminal element into the neighborhood. He suggested the possibility of installing speed bumps on Martha Avenue and Lincoln Avenue should the project be approved.

Arthur Johnson, owner of the industrial property at 22707 Western Avenue, stated that the area is dangerous, both in terms of traffic and criminal activity, and maintained that the proposed coffee kiosk would only make it more so. He noted that there is a stone works business on Western, which uses large trucks that block traffic.

Rosie Soto, 2608 Martha Avenue, expressed concerns that the project would increase traffic on residential streets and create noise. She reported that there was formerly a catering business at this location, and she experienced a lot of noise from workers on their breaks. She noted that motorists often cut through the neighborhood when traffic backs up on Sepulveda due to trains or construction and that the large trucks from the stone works business block traffic on Lincoln, creating a hazard.

In response to Vice-Chair Uchima's inquiry, Ms. Soto indicated that she usually sees the large trucks from the stone works business on her way home from work between 4:15 and 5:00 p.m. and on Saturdays.

Returning to the podium, Mr. Dallen explained that, in addition to the large trucks that block traffic on Lincoln, there are parking problems on this street due to the apartment complex.

Vice-Chair Uchima suggested the possibility of the eliminating the access on Lincoln, and Mr. Dallen voiced his opinion that it would be a lot safer for the neighborhood without this access.

John Gertsch, the owner of the property at 2620 Martha Avenue, reported that the corner of Martha and Lincoln is a real trouble spot and expressed doubt as to whether there was sufficient room for two cars going in opposite directions to negotiate the turn with cars parked on both sides of the street.

Returning to the podium, Mr. Murray stated that the applicant was not opposed to eliminating the access on Lincoln Avenue. He explained that 80-90% of the business is expected to ingress and egress from Western Avenue and noted that it has been the company's experience that 80% of its business takes place before noon.

In response to Vice-Chair Uchima's inquiry, Mr. Murray indicated that there will be two or three employees on site at any given time and that the Code requires four parking spaces and six will be provided.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Planning Associate Chun advised that the Transportation Planning Division did not require an access on Lincoln but did limit it to ingress only to try to alleviate the impact on neighborhood traffic. She noted that plans call for a six-foot high decorative block wall separating the business from residential neighbors. With regard to criminal activity, she reported that the Police Department reviewed the plans and recommended some conditions but made no mention of crime across the street.

Commissioner Drevno indicated that she was not comfortable having access on Lincoln, relating her observation that the street seems unusually narrow.

Vice-Chair Uchima asked about the City's policy with regard to speed bumps. Planning Manager Isomoto advised that the Fire Department is very opposed to speed bumps on City streets because they can impede emergency vehicles; that studies have shown that speed bumps increase noise from vehicles traveling down a street; and that the Transportation Planning Division would not be in favor of installing speed bumps on either Martha or Lincoln.

Returning to the podium, Mr. Johnson provided information about crime in the area, reporting that he has personally observed people driving down Western shooting at each other, as well as an incident where a man in a welding shop across the street was killed when the shop was sprayed with gunfire.

Mr. Dallen expressed concerns that having a business with cash on hand at this location might attract the criminal element from across the street.

Mr. Murray requested that a decision be made at tonight's meeting and reiterated the applicant's willingness to eliminate the Lincoln Avenue access.

MOTION: Commissioner Drevno, seconded by Commissioner LaBouff, moved to close the public hearing; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Indicating that he would not support the project, Vice-Chair Uchima stated that he was swayed by residents' concerns about having a cash business at this location due to the potential for attracting criminal activity, as well as the impact on neighborhood traffic.

Noting that he shared the same concerns, Commissioner Botello stated that he would like to see this type of coffee kiosk in operation before approving another one on a major arterial because of the possibility that kiosk customers will impede the flow of traffic during morning rush hours and plans will have to be modified.

Commissioner Drevno indicated that she also would not support the project because there were too many unanswered questions.

MOTION: Commissioner Botello moved to deny CUP04-00037. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Drevno and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Faulk and Chairperson Muratsuchi).

Planning Manager Isomoto noted that staff would return with a revised resolution for the Commission's approval at the next meeting.

10. RESOLUTIONS

None.

11. PUBLIC WORKSHOP ITEMS

None.

12. MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

None.

13. CITY COUNCIL ACTION ON PLANNING MATTERS

Planning Manager Isomoto reviewed recent City Council action on Planning matters, noting that the proposed Lexus dealership on Hawthorne Boulevard was denied at the October 12 Council meeting and controlled parking for Tormed Medical Building was approved at the October 19 Council meeting.

14. LIST OF TENTATIVE PLANNING COMMISSION CASES

Planning Manager Isomoto reviewed the agenda for the November 3, 2004 Planning Commission meeting. She noted that at the last meeting, Commissioners requested that a discussion item on the League of Women Voters' report be included on the November 3 agenda, however, she was not sure such an item was appropriate because the report has been discussed a number of times at City Council level and plans are underway to implement some of the recommendations.

A brief discussion ensued, and it was the consensus of the Commission to wait until the next meeting to decide whether or not to pursue this topic.

15. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

15A. Commissioner Drevno noted that developers sometimes ask to meet with Commissioners privately to discuss their projects and questioned whether it was permissible for Commissioners to do so.

Deputy City Attorney Whitham advised that the Brown Act does not prohibit private meetings with developers as long as the developers are not trying to reach a consensus and Commissioners meet with them individually and do not share information among themselves about the project.

15B. Commissioner Drevno requested an excused absence for the November 3, 2004 Commission meeting,

Commissioner Botello, seconded by Commissioner Horwich, so moved; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

15C. Planning Manager Isomoto reported that after experiencing heart problems, Commissioner Faulk had undergone angioplasty and was currently hospitalized.

Commissioners offered well-wishes for a speedy recovery.

16. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:35 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday November 3, 2004, at 7:00 p.m.

Approved as Written December 1, 2004 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
