

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF  
THE TORRANCE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Torrance Redevelopment Agency convened in regular session on Tuesday, November 21, 2006, at 8:16 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

**ROLL CALL**

Present: Members Brewer, Drevno, McIntyre, Nowatka, Sutherland, Witkowsky and Chairman Scotto.

Absent: None

Also Present: Agency Director Jackson, Acting Agency Attorney Fellows, Agency Secretary Herbers and other staff representatives.

**2. Report of the Agency Clerk on the Posting of the Redevelopment Agency Agenda**

Agency Clerk Herbers reported on the posting of the agenda.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – October 3 and November 14, 2006**

**MOTION:** Member Sutherland moved for the approval of the October 3, 2006 and November 14, 2006 minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Member McIntyre and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

**4. COMMUNICATIONS AND OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

**5. HEARINGS**

**5A. CUP06-00009, TTM61985R: MICHAEL MULLIGAN DEVELOPMENT**

The Planning Commission and Deputy Executive Director recommend that the Redevelopment Agency deny the appeal and adopt Resolutions approving a Conditional Use Permit to allow the construction of a mixed-use development consisting of seven condominium units and a Vesting Tentative Tract Map for condominium purposes on property located in the Downtown Project Area, Commercial Sector at 1620 Gramercy Avenue.

The public hearing was opened at 8:17 p.m.

With the aid of slides, Sr. Planning Associate Chun briefly reviewed the proposed project, which consists of three commercial spaces on the ground level and seven residential condominium units on the second and third level.

Member Brewer, echoed by Member McIntyre, expressed concerns about the small size of the commercial spaces (450 to 750 square feet).

Michael Bihn, representing Michael Mulligan Development, reported that most of the commercial spaces in downtown Torrance are fairly large and preliminary research has revealed a demand for smaller spaces.

Chairman Scotto noted that the small spaces are likely to attract businesses like insurance brokers that don't generate foot traffic.

Member Witkowsky suggested using partition walls in the commercial space that could be moved to accommodate larger businesses.

Mr. Bihn explained that the commercial space cannot be reconfigured due to the stairways, but it could be expanded by approximately 700 square feet.

Bonnie Mae Barnard, Save Historical Old Torrance (SHOT), disagreed with the claim in the staff report that the project was categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act, maintaining that an Environmental Impact Report was required because the project could have a significant impact on surrounding historic resources. She voiced objections to the project, contending that it is mainly a residential condominium development with only a small commercial element, which will do nothing to improve the economic climate of business district.

With the aid of slides, Don Barnard, SHOT, presented an alternate concept plan for the site created by historic preservation architect Gordon Olschlager, which emphasizes the commercial space and complements the adjacent Irving J. Gill buildings. He shared photographs of Petaluma, Claremont, Brea, Walnut Creek, Valencia and San Pablo Bay as examples of cities in the process of revitalizing their downtown areas.

William Fitzgerald, owner of The Crest, 1625 Cabrillo Avenue, stated that he strongly opposes the project because he fears that live music from his restaurant would draw complaints from residents and damage the business he has worked so hard to build. He also expressed concerns that the project would exacerbate parking problems.

In response to Member Witkowsky's inquiry, Deputy City Attorney Whitham confirmed that the City has noise ordinance that limits the sound that can emanate from a business regardless of where it is located.

Responding to Member Sutherland's inquiry, Sr. Planning Manager Chun confirmed that it would be possible to require that the CC&Rs include language disclosing that a restaurant with live music is adjacent to the project.

Chairman Scotto recalled that West End Racquet Club was forced to curtail the hours during which they could hold banquets due to complaints about noise from residents of nearby condominiums, which were built long after the racquet club. He stated that he thought it was unfair to penalize existing businesses when residential complexes are built around them and expressed concerns that the same thing would happen if this project goes forward.

Janet Payne, Engracia Avenue, stressed the need to preserve the City's historical downtown area by establishing a Historical Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) and creating a Historic Preservation Officer position in the Community Development Department. She commented on the difficulty of designing a project that is compatible with the adjacent Irving Gill buildings because these buildings were not subject to the more stringent parking and setback requirements currently in effect. She stated that while she was not entirely satisfied with the proposed project, she believed the applicant has made a genuine effort to comply with direction given at Planning Commission meetings to include commercial space on the first floor and incorporate Irving Gill elements in the architectural design.

Nina McCoy, 220<sup>th</sup> Street, stated that she would like to see more commercial space in the downtown area so nearby residents could walk to stores and restaurants and socialize with their neighbors. She expressed concerns that property owners are failing to maintain their buildings and then citing their blighted condition as a rationale for allowing them to be replaced with condominium developments. She urged the City to require that properties be properly maintained.

Mary Steinkamp, Acacia Avenue, stated that she has been very disappointed by condominium projects built in this area, some of which already look blighted, and called for the creation of a HPOZ.

Sharon Imel, Border Avenue, expressed concerns that the parking provided was not adequate for residents, customers and employees. She questioned whether the project's appearance was consistent with the City's vision for the downtown area.

Member Sutherland noted that the subject property has been blighted since he moved to Old Torrance in 1981 and stressed the need for a comprehensive plan for the downtown area. Indicating that he would not support the project, he stated that he believed it was adequate at best and that he was particularly concerned about the lack of any parking for the commercial space and about the project's potential impact on The Crest.

Member McIntyre stated that while she agreed the subject property was in need of improvement, she did not believe the proposed project was a very imaginative solution. She expressed concerns about the absence of any landscaping and the lack of harmony with the surrounding neighborhood.

Member Brewer stated that he believed a mixed-use project was appropriate for this site, however, he was concerned about the small size of the commercial space and the possibility that residents would be impacted by existing businesses. He commended the applicant for his efforts to comply with the direction given by staff and the Planning Commission.

Member Drevno expressed the hope that this City Council would take on the issue of development in the Old Torrance area as it has become a constant source of debate. She indicated that she had a lot of concerns about the project, particularly the long flight of stairs to access the condominium units, and could not support it as proposed.

Member Witkowsky noted that there are successful mixed-use developments in the downtown area where residents are happy and businesses are thriving. She cited the development on the former site of the social security office, which has commercial spaces that are not much larger than the ones proposed. Voicing support for the project, she stated that she liked having the second and third floors setback from the street to provide private patios for the residential units. She pointed out that the project was thoroughly reviewed by the Planning Commission over the course of three meetings and eventually approved.

Member Nowatka stated that he believed a mixed-use development was appropriate for this site and was confident that noise problems could be mitigated, however, he objected to the project's appearance and favored something more like Mr. Olschlager's conceptual design.

Mr. Bihn expressed frustration that there seems to be no consensus of what the City wants on this site and despite repeated revisions, the project is still not acceptable. He suggested that people could become discouraged from buying properties in this area due to the lack of clearly defined guidelines.

Member Brewer suggested that Agency members provide direction to Mr. Bihn regarding revisions to the project.

Chairman Scotto stated that he liked Mr. Olschlager's conceptual plan, but objected to the staircase that takes access from the alley because he thought it was unsafe, and he was also concerned that it does not meet parking requirements. He asked about the possibility of subterranean parking.

Mr. Bihn explained that the odd-shaped lot makes subterranean parking impractical.

Member Brewer stated that he liked the parking configuration and roof garden in Mr. Olschlager's plan, but was concerned that the commercial spaces are completely separate and cannot be merged should a business wish to expand.

Member Sutherland indicated that he favored more commercial and less residential space.

Member McIntyre stated that she believed a mixed-use project was the best use for this site and that she was impressed with the alternate plan submitted by Mr. Olschlager.

Mr. Bihn noted that the three commercial spaces are tied to condominiums in the current plans and questioned whether the Agency favored this "live-work" concept. It was the consensus of the Agency that the commercial space should be completely separate from the residential units.

Mr. Bihn expressed concerns about being able to meet parking requirements with separate commercial space, explaining that the live-work arrangement was the rationale for having no parking for the commercial space. He cautioned that there is no perfect plan for this site and there must be compromises. He related his experience that when regulations become too restrictive, building comes to a halt.

**MOTION:** At 9:45 p.m. Member Sutherland moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Member McIntyre and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

**MOTION:** Member Brewer moved to approve the appeal and deny the project without prejudice. The motion was seconded by Member Sutherland and passed by unanimous roll call vote. Resolutions to be brought back for adoption.

**6. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR AND OTHER OFFICERS**

None.

**7. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

None.

**8. ADDENDUM MATTERS**

None.

**9. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

None.

**10. REQUEST FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None.

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

At 9:45 p.m. Member Brewer moved to adjourn the meeting to Tuesday, December 12, 2006 at 5:30 p.m. for an Executive Session, with regular business to commence at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. The motion was seconded by Member Nowatka and passed by unanimous roll call vote. Tuesday, November 28 and Tuesday, December 5, 2006 will be dark nights.