

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
July 21, 2009
7:00 p.m.

City Council Chambers*
1017 Middlefield Rd
Redwood City, CA
Ph: 650-780-7233
Accessible to Disabled

APPROVED

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Commissioner Borgens, Commissioner Holt, Commissioner Schmidt, Commissioner Seybert, Commissioner Smith, and Chair Gee

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Vice-Chair Radcliffe

STAFF PRESENT: Principal Planner Passanisi, Assistant City Attorney Aranda, Planning Manager Ekas, Planning Secretary Mateo

GUESTS: Laura Stetson – Hogle-Ireland

PROCEEDINGS RECORDED: For further information not contained in this draft of the written minutes, an audio cassette and DVD recording of the entire meeting is available for listening or purchase at the Planning office, located in City Hall, Redwood City.

AGENDA POSTED: Copies of the Agenda for this meeting are posted at City Hall on the Friday prior to the Planning Commission meeting.

1. ROLL CALL

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

M/S (Seybert/Borgens) to approve the minutes of December 9, 2008 as submitted

Motion Passed 5-0 (Schmidt Abstain)

M/S (Seybert/Holt) to approve the minutes of January 13, 2009 as submitted

Motion Passed 5-0 (Schmidt Abstain)

M/S (Seybert/Holt) to approve the minutes of January 27, 2009 as submitted

Motion Passed 5-0 (Schmidt Abstain)

M/S (Seybert/Holt) to approve the minutes of June 23, 2009 as submitted

Motion Passed 5-0 (Schmidt Abstain)

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS: None

4. CONSENT CALENDAR: None

5. REDWOOD CITY NEW GENERAL PLAN – DRAFT LAND USE AND URBAN FORM ELEMENT

Laura Stetson, Hogle-Ireland, gave a PowerPoint on the following:

Draft General Plan – Built Environment Chapter: Land Use and Urban Form

Meeting Objectives

- Review Land Use and Urban Form Element, Built Environment Chapter
- Introduce Proposed Land Use Alternatives at Whipple/Veterans Node
- Respond to Questions and Public Comment

General Plan Elements

- Introduction
- Built Environment
- Housing
- Building Community
- Public Safety
- Natural Resources
- Implementation Matrix
- Glossary
- Appendix

Built Environment

- Vision
- Land Use/Urban Form
- Circulation
- Economic Development
- Historic Resources
- Infrastructure

Planning Context

- City and Sphere of Influence
- San Carlos Airport CLUP
- San Francisco BCDC

Vision

- Land use balance and diversity = Quality of life and economic success
- Historic patterns and buildings will provide design cues
- Focus on infill development: Sustainable approach

Guiding Principles

- Plan for sustainability within our finite resources including but not limited to open space, water, energy and air quality.
- Ensure that change harmonizes with existing development to preserve our historic and neighborhood character.
- Partner with and embrace our neighborhoods to improve health, safety, and well-being for all in our community.
- Design for active pedestrian and bicycle-friendly streets and public spaces.

Built Environment: Land Use and Urban Form

-Land Use

- 2-dimensional
- Focus on activity
- Quantitative

-Urban Form

- 3-dimensional
- Focus on aesthetics
- Qualitative

Built Environment: Urban Form – Color-coded map of the corridors, centers and neighborhoods.

Urban Form: Neighborhoods – w/color-coded map

- Historic Influence Low Density
- Historic Influence High Density
- Post-War
- Mixed Density
- Hillside
- Master Planned
- Waterfront

Urban Form: Neighborhoods – w/housing and use area photos and aerial photo of:

- Historic Influence Low Density
- Historic Influence High Density
- Post War
- Mixed Density
- Hillsides
- Master Planned Community
- Waterfront

Urban Form: Corridors

- El Camino Real
- Woodside Road
- Middlefield Road
- Veterans Boulevard
- Broadway
- Redwood Shores Pkwy
- Marine Pkwy

Corridors: El Camino Real – drawing, aerial photo and photograph of Grand Boulevard

Corridors: Woodside Road – photo and drawing

- Pedestrian connective
- Mixed uses

Corridors: Middlefield Road – photos and drawing

- Modest scale
- Neighborhood commercial
- Streetscape

Corridors: Veterans Boulevard – aerial photo and drawing: Oriented towards visitors to Redwood City

Corridors: Broadway – drawing

- Mix of uses and intensities
- Streetcar connection to Downtown

Urban Form: Centers

- Downtown
- Employment Centers
- Regional Commercial
- Port Industrial

Centers: Downtown – photographs

- Mix of uses and intensities
- Move forward with Precise Plan

Centers: Employment – photographs: urban form that supports business functions

Centers: Regional Commercial – photographs: largely auto-oriented

Centers: Port Industrial - photo: functions require outdoor uses

Land Use Color-coded Map – with key for General Plan Land Uses: Residential, Commercial, Mixed Use, Industrial, Public/Quasi-Public and Open Space with varying subcategories/color-coding

- Type
- Intensity
- Location

Options to Consider – Color-coded map

Jill Ekas, Planning Manager, spoke on Office Professional Use recommendations. Professional Office (pink areas on the map) held a 1.0 floor ratio (FAR) and Office Technology with R&D (purple mapped areas) had lower FARs. The decision at hand was whether or not to be specifically discerning in these usages since in the past there had been challenges in matching the market to the proposed uses. She noted the mapping for this area had been presented to the General Plan Committee previously. The Committee's suggestion as well as other opinions included being mindful of the changes that may occur within the Silicon Valley, but also aware that these changes are not easily predicted. Flexibility was key in defining these usage areas.

Ms. Stetson continued with her PowerPoint and spoke on an industrial pocket area across from the Target Center in what could potentially be a Live-Work area. She also discussed State law-required Zones for Emergency and Homeless Shelters.

Ms. Ekas discussed the Cemex Property as a Heavy Industrial area which is a site the City has now purchased along with the Bair Island Aquatic Center parcel. Staff felt the area was a pivotal transition point between the proposed expansion of an emerging Mixed Use Waterfront neighborhood and a well-established Heavy Industrial area. Both required protection from each other, but also could be compatible with the right buffering zones. Staff questioned whether it would be appropriate to place this property in the Light Industrial category if the City chose not to keep it, in order that it was a better long-term transition from one side to the other. She stressed the importance of securing a land use control change while the City owned the land which would meet any long-term transitions for the area.

She spoke to the professional office area on the other side of Veteran's running from Price, Convention and Veterans a reduction in size for the Regional Commercial mode. Staff hoped for some new motion, relocation and focus on auto dealership areas along the interchange. Years prior it was very challenging to analyze the uses for this area but it was now fleshed out as a Regional Retail area becoming a liner usage area along the freeway with an effective buffer between the freeway. She noted the opposite side of Veterans and the Dodge Site concept area where a reconnection to the neighborhood may occur with a street going through the Dodge Site. A Mixed Use Corridor suggestion has come up in this area and/or High Density Residential. She noted developers would be greatly interested in this as a Mixed Use Corridor.

Commissioner Borgen asked for clarification on Staff's recommendations for the Cemex area, which Ms. Ekas had cited as Industrial or Light Industrial. She suggested the addition of some Light Commercial Use in the area as well.

Ms. Ekas stated it was anticipated that the Mixed Use Waterfront category allowed for commercial use. Within this area there could be a neighborhood commercial hub which was part of the Peninsula Park planning.

Ms. Stetson continued her PowerPoint on the following:

Land Use Policy Implications – tabled out for Dwelling Units, Population and Employment at Baseline 2009, General Plan Built Out at 2030, Change and Percent Change

Sustainability Initiatives

- Environment
- Economy
- Equity

Sustainability Initiatives

- Land use plan that matches housing opportunities to range of jobs available
- Complete Neighborhoods, Districts, and Centers
- Ties and access to transit
- Green building programs

Upcoming Workshops

- July 27: Joint Study Session with City Council – Draft Elements

- July 28: Building Community Element – Housing and Human Concerns Committee
- August 6: Building Community Element – Boards, Committees, and Commission
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COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Seybert made the following points.

- The suggestion that further wording be added to describe the Post War labeling in the Urban Form section. While it was clear as an architectural style, there was no further description of its density aspects, location and or historical considerations.
- The notation that there was a great deal on the maximum densities and height densities, specifically, in the Urban Form section; however, he did not see anything on minimum densities which were important in planning an area. He stated either the General Plan and/or the Downtown Precise Plan spoke to these minimums, for example.
- Agreement that the Cemex site be considered for Light Industrial use to include, if the City so decided, the location of the new Public Works facilities. He noted Light Industrial provided a great buffer zone in terms of the City making use of that land.
- Preference that combining the Office Professional and Technology with R&D areas be left to Zoning discussions since inclusion of this in the new General Plan made it more confusing.
- The importance of Gateways into the City since any talk of Corridors leads to the importance of these gateways throughout the City. He noted there were Urban Form sections specifically for Corridors, Centers and Neighborhoods. Gateways was an additional category suggestion and/or could be included as a subcategory under Corridors.
- Charting regarding the theoretical build-out for the City which does not address the job/housing balance. While Planning discussions are not future predictions, inclusion of some Mixed Use housing discussions was necessary to address the continued job/housing imbalance in the City.
- Reiteration that the Cargill Lands will be dealt with once the General Plan has been adopted. He suggested this be better worded to reflect that this area, and any other areas like it, would be dealt with when and if any applications came forward which were General Plan amendments. He noted there can be a General Plan amendment made anywhere in the City, and that the Cargill Lands happened to be one of these places where an application has been made.

Commissioner Borgens agreed with the bulk of the above Commissioner's comments. She noted, however, better wording be used in the Urban Form and Land Use section with regard to Waste Water, where Recycled Water was the better way to describe this concept rather than citing it as waste water removal.

Commissioner Schmidt asked what the Syufy Site was zoned for at this current time.

Mrs. Ekas stated the Zoning at the current time for the Syufy site was General Commercial. The General Plan land use designation was Commercial Office.

Commissioner Schmidt asked for clarification of the liner use area along the freeway.

Mrs. Ekas stated this was an attempt to describe the Urban Form of having lining along the freeways and the frontage use aspects of this area.

Commissioner Schmidt suggested further wording in the Urban Form section with regard to fostering civic pride, local identity, community spirit and safety, physical and mental health, and wellness. He asked for clarification on Complete Streets in Neighborhoods.

Ms. Stetson noted Complete Streets in Neighborhoods was with regard to creating a street which accommodated many forms of movement, not just automobiles, but wide, shaded sidewalks, bike lanes, transit stops, pedestrian activities and sidewalk dining and the like.

Commissioner Holt agreed with Commissioner Seybert's comments with regards to the specifics. She asked for clarification on the car dealership on Veterans as to its Zoning and Land Use designations.

Mrs. Ekas clarified, if she was referring to the Dodge Dealership on Veteran's, this was zoned as Commercial and was Commercial Office on the 1990 General Plan Land Use map. Staff was looking towards a change to Regional Commercial which emphasized retail in that area.

Commissioner Holt agreed that current zoning and usage was not appropriate and had not been successful. The foresight of having the land on the other side as Office Professional with the border along the freeway was a better choice.

Mrs. Ekas stated the other reason they were looking for a mix of uses on the opposite side of Veterans on Price and Convention was in keeping with market conditions. Despite the slow down currently, it was important to keep this area flexible in use aspects in preparation for perhaps medical offices and the like. She noted the Planning Commission and City Council had suggested that great care be taken in making decisions on the land in the lower Broadway area between Douglas and Woodside, keeping this as Light Industrial with an Incubator Overlay.

Commissioner Holt made the following points:

- Further study was needed on whether or not it was appropriate to remove the flyover and its impacts on the Woodside area and Circulation.
- The need to respect neighborhood areas, their historic character and densities. She noted the importance of specifics in the Policies and Program sections to address these areas with specifics on programs and their implementations.

Commissioner Smith noted the importance of information on the map to include Corridors in the Redwood Shores area. He stressed the need for this area to be highlighted. He asked whether it was feasible to consider transitional land use designations and/or transitional zoning designations as seen in other municipalities.

Ms. Stetson asked if he had a particular municipality in mind in order to make a more specific comparison.

Commissioner Smith spoke to what the City of Sunnyvale had done with regard to Fair Oaks and Tasman Drive. This had been characterized by industrial uses, but in planning they wished to facilitate residential development in the area as well. It was zoned out literally as Industrial to Residential (ITR) for these transitional purposes.

Ms. Stetson stated she was interested in talking to the Sunnyvale planners about this.

Mrs. Ekas stated she had previous experience working in the City of Sunnyvale. The ITR came in to accommodate the transit nodes for the light rail in the area. They had a real specific node designation for this in and around the transit stops. Quite a few of the sites did redevelop into residential use in anticipation of the light rail system coming in. This was distinctly related to a proposed change in the city's infrastructure. She noted she was interested in learning more on how some of the City's Mixed Use and Live/Work areas and the Light Industrial Incubator Overlay areas offered this type of transitioning. She noted Staff likely would research this further.

Ms. Stetson pointed out the Industrial Live/Work area was one for which this transitioning idea was interesting. She noted, whatever these transitional uses might be, the City would have to find that they could operate in tandem. Most Land Use categories are very black and white in comparison to this transitional approach. She agreed this would be explored further.

Commissioner Smith spoke on Middlefield Road and encouraged the idea of medium scale commercial development at designated locations. He stressed the importance of retaining the cultural diversity in this area.

Ms. Stetson agreed this was a very unique and vibrant area. She suggested that the Commission submit any language or word-smithing suggestions to Ms. Ekas or Mr. Passanisi. She asked if there was any further discussion on the policy issues or changes, other than the language aspects.

Chair Gee encouraged the Planning Commissioners to Xerox the originals and note their changes which could then be submitted to Ms. Ekas and Mr. Passanisi.

Ms. Ekas noted there was a conflict between the Middlefield Road section which was presented as a two-story maximum height. She clarified that the two primary Land Use designations that were shown were a Medium High Density Residential, which has a three-story height limit, and some Neighborhood Commercial or Mixed Use Neighborhoods with four-story height limits. There were current height limits along Middlefield much of which allowed 75 feet in height. Staff was proposing the three- and four-story limits, with the notation of the two-story limit cited as an error.

Chair Gee asked every Commissioner to comment on the Land Use Options slide in the PowerPoint and whether or not they agreed with the direction Staff and Consultants were headed. He looked specifically for their opinions on the mixed use areas of Office Professional and Technology with R&D, which were the two heavily discussed areas and noted on the map in Pink and Purple, respectively.

Commissioner Smith noted he was in agreement with the direction Staff and Consultants were taking. His only issue with the combined usage areas was in that the wording remain flexible, and not ride directly on Technology.

Commissioner Seybert was in agreement with Staff and the Consultants. He noted further that the Dodge site was a perfect transition area for housing and hoped that access in that area was consistent and honored the neighborhood character.

Commissioner Smith reiterated his opinion that the transitional or mixed use area concerns were better dealt with in Zoning. He noted he would be interested in knowing, once the New General Plan was adopted, what the next step would be in regard to these Zoning issues. He stressed the importance of preventing a disconnect in Planning and Zoning.

Commissioner Holt agreed on the flexibility in options for the Office Professional and Technology usage areas.

Commissioner Schmidt concurred as well on combining the above-mentioned usage areas.

Commissioner Borgens expressed agreement on the above-mentioned Office Professional and Technology areas.

Chair Gee agreed the best thing to do was err on flexibility and simplicity. He stated on Veterans, as the General Plan was at the moment, medical uses were difficult to consider due to the current Zoning. He believed there would be the need and application for that zoning. He was in agreement with Mixed Use Waterfront designation for the Sentry site, the Light Industrial designation for the Cemex Site and looked forward to the development of a great project on the Dodge site since this was a gateway into the City.

Prior to beginning Public Comment, the Chair noted there were a significant number of emails that had come in from the community regarding the Cargill Site. The Commission, Staff and the Consultants have worked hard to honor the City Council's action in January 2009. This resulted in noting that whatever had been set in the 1990 General Plan held, with the entire process being given a second look with regard to incoming applications. An application had been submitted to the City for the Cargill Site. He stressed that the Commission was taking great care in honoring the Council's actions in this regard.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Clem Molony, Redwood City resident, noted his comments were in keeping with views of Lyngso Garden Materials and Greg Greenway and the Seaport Industrial Association. He made comments regarding industrial development, land use, sustainable change, port industrial centers and urban form.

Jim Begelow, Redwood City San Mateo County Charter, noted the quality and readability of the corridors aspects as outlined in the draft. He spoke on Veterans, El Camino and Woodside Corridors and noted the challenge of the current levels of traffic congestion. He suggested the New General Plan adoption contain a very strong transportation solution with shared communication between the various transportation participants and agencies.

Alan Carson, Redwood City resident, was appreciative of the Commission's lean toward flexibility in the drafted plan. He agreed word-smithing was very important since the plan will be challenged years down the road. He agreed with wording towards more flexible uses in given areas rather than specific use designations.

Nita Spangler, Redwood City resident, complimented Ms. Stetson her on PowerPoint presentation which she deemed as very good and very literate. She spoke on Corridors and asked if something could be done with the corridor coming into the City on Edgewood Road. This was an important gateway into the City. She stressed the need for more affordable and efficiency-sized living spaces throughout the City.

David Buchholz, San Jose Resident, spoke on the waterfront area north of 101 and his past experiences in real estate development. He noted the properties north of the 101 area were subject to impacts by any use limitations. He agreed on the need for flexibility regarding the possible mixed uses that might be appropriate in this area in the future.

Chek-Fong Tang, Sywest/Ken Kay Associates gave a PowerPoint on the Syufy Site Project which included:

Great Potential: Photographs, aerial and otherwise of the site plan area.

Site Design Analysis: Color Map and information regarding the Vision as well as the Designing and Planning Principles.

Proposed General Plan Amendment: Color-coded map with overlays for Regional Commercial and Mixed Use Waterfront

Proposed Plan Diagram aerial map with color-coded overlays for the Site and the Peninsula Park area to understand the appropriate land use issues to keep in mind in building out a complete neighborhood concept.

(Mr. Chek-Fong Tang made use of slides 1, 2, 6 and 4 from a previous presentation given at the March 17, 2009 Planning Commission Meeting).

Elizabeth Puccinelli, Sywest Development, congratulated Staff and the Commission on their hard work and agreed on the easy readability of the Land Use Element. She was supportive of the alternative, mixed use waterfront and Old Sentry Theater property components. She spoke on recent and past economic changes, the environment, the Bay neighborhood, Bay Trail and the City's reputation. She stressed the importance of studying vehicle mileage and the number of employees who continue to work within the City but live outside its borders.

Lynne Trulio, Friends of Redwood City (FRC), commended the Commission, Staff and Consultants for bringing forward the 1990 General Plan language with regard to the Cargill Site. She used a map to better delineate the uses of the Cargill Properties, which lent to salt production from 1943 onward, versus a previously proposed year of usage as 1901. She suggested a map with this more clearly defined be included in the Appendix of the New General Plan for public transparency. She suggested as well that a tidal plane designation for the Abernathy property be extended as a full tidal plane throughout the property.

Gail Raabe, Friends of Redwood City, noted the remainder of the FRC members were at a meeting regarding the new jail site on the Dodge dealership property. She hoped this was not the site that would be chosen. She noted the comments made by Ms. Trulio had also been submitted in writing by email. She noted they had suggested edits in the areas of Land Use and Urban Form figures, tables and narratives consistent with the New Land Use Policy Map, as well as other chapters of the New General Plan. These changes and notations were in specific regard to Cargill Salt Pond area's current Open Space status.

Chair Gee noted an additional new jail site had been proposed for San Carlos, at the gateway to Redwood Shores.

James Jonas, Redwood City resident, complimented Staff, the Commission, the Consultants and the City Council for their work on the New General Plan. He noted the plan was coming together regarding the goals and ambitions for the City. He appreciated the initiative he had seen in the City's willingness to deal with sea rise issues head-on, rather than settling for the status quo.

Mrs. Ekas noted, for the record, Staff's appreciation of public comment. With regard to accessory living units, referred to by Ms. Spangler, she noted that these were allowed on every lot in Redwood City which has a single-family home on the lot, as long as the unit meets the criteria with respect to size and the provision of parking, setbacks and other criteria. She stated these types of units were also mentioned in the Housing Element of the Draft General Plan and did not appear in the Land Use Element. These types of living quarters are also noted in the Zoning Ordinance. They are allowable, legal and not owned separately, but rented from existing property owners of the main dwelling. She noted, as well, Staff had received a lot of public comment with regard to the Hetch Hetchy water concept. More on this was included in the Building Community Element which focuses on a wide range of topics including Parks, Recreations and Trail types of uses.

6. MATTERS OF COMMISSION INTEREST

A City Council Meeting is scheduled for August 3rd and a Planning Commission Meeting is scheduled for August 4th. Ms. Ekas noted this would be a Study Session. Development Review was still pending. The Study Session would include two applications received in the last few weeks, one for In-And-Out Burger and an application for Housing at 333 Main Street.

7. M/S (Seybert/Borgens) to adjourn at 9:00 p.m.