

March 15, 2006

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Planning Commission convened in a regular session at 7:05 p.m. on Wednesday, March 15, 2005, in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Horwich.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Browning, Busch, Drevno, Faulk, Gibson, Horwich, and Chairperson Uchima.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Sr. Planning Associate Lodan, Planning Assistant Hurd, Deputy City Attorney Whitham, Fire Marshal Kazandjian, Building Regulations Administrator Segovia, and Associate Civil Engineer Symons.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner Browning, seconded by Commissioner Faulk, 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 – February 1, 2006

MOTION: Commissioner Busch moved for the approval of the February 1, 2006 Planning Commission minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Horwich and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

6. REQUESTS FOR POSTPONEMENT

Sr. Planning Associate Lodan noted that Item 8A (EAS05-00003, MOD05-00012: Jamie Alai) had been withdrawn and relayed requests to continue Item 10A (DIV06-00003: Del Amo Fashion Center Operating Company LLC); Item 10B (EAS06-00001, MOD07-00002: American Honda Motor Co.); and Item 10F (PRE06-00005: Tim and Tracy Byer) to April 5, 2006.

MOTION: Commissioner Busch, seconded by Commissioner Drevno, moved to continue Items 10A, 10B and 10C to April 5, 2006; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Sr. Planning Associate Lodan announced that the hearing on Item 10F would be re-advertised to reflect the incorporation of a Waiver and that the hearings on Items 10A and 10B would not be re-advertised because they were continued to a date certain.

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

7. **TIME EXTENSIONS** – None.

8. **CONTINUED HEARINGS**

8A. **EAS05-00003, MOD05-00012 (CUP96-00002, PRE96-00003): JAMIE ALAI**

Planning Commission consideration of an Environmental Assessment and adoption of a Negative Declaration to allow a Modification of a previously approved Conditional Use Permit and a Precise Plan of Development to allow the expansion of an existing self-storage facility on property located in the M1-PP Zone at 23711 Crenshaw Boulevard.

This item was withdrawn.

9. **WAIVERS** – None.

10. **FORMAL HEARINGS**

10A. **DIV06-00003: DEL AMO FASHION CENTER OPERATING COMPANY LLC**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Division of Lot to allow a lot line adjustment between APN 7366-019-085 and APN 7366-019-088 on property located in the Hawthorne Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan Zone, Del Amo Business Sub-District One at 3525 Carson Street.

Continued to April 5, 2006.

10B. **EAS06-00001, MOD06-00002: AMERICAN HONDA MOTOR CO.**

Planning Commission consideration for adoption of a Negative Declaration and approval of a Modification to a previously approved Conditional Use Permit (CUP83-7) to allow the construction of an approximately 50,000 square-foot research and design building on an existing corporate headquarters facility on property located in the Industrial Redevelopment Project Area at 1900 Harpers Way.

Continued to April 5, 2006.

10C. **PRE05-00050, WAV05-00032: DON WORTMAN**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow the construction of first and second-story additions to an existing one-story, single-family residence in conjunction with a Waiver to allow a reduction in the side yard setback requirements on property located in the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 273 Via Linda Vista.

Recommendation

Approval.

Planning Assistant Hurd introduced the request and noted supplemental material available at the meeting consisting of correspondence received after the agenda item was completed.

Richard Gould, project architect, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. He stated that the project will benefit the neighborhood because this home has been rundown for a long period of time and noted that the second-story addition is relatively small and set in from the first story to preserve neighbors' privacy.

Carol Laumen, 269 Via Linda Vista, stated that she believes the proposed project is a step in the right direction but objects to certain elements. She reported that the second-story balcony at the rear of the addition would have a direct view into her bedroom, backyard and deck; noted that she was told by the Wortmans that this would be a "faux" deck; and proposed that the deck be limited to a depth of 4-6 inches. She also objected to the window on the west side of the second story due to the impact on privacy and proposed that it be replaced by a skylight or an opaque window located above eye level.

Max Godsil, 659 Calle Miramar, contended that the proposed project would adversely affect his view and privacy, submitting photographs to illustrate. He noted that the tree mentioned in the staff report as a deciduous tree that will provide more privacy when its foliage returns, is actually a dead avocado tree that will likely be removed. He expressed concerns about construction noise and about the precedent that would be set by allowing a second story.

Commissioner Browning questioned whether Mr. Godsil had alerted the Planning Department about his concerns. Mr. Godsil explained that he has been out of town for two weeks and did not have an opportunity to do so.

Commissioner Faulk noted that he left a card at Mr. Godsil's residence, but did not get a response.

In response to Commissioner Busch's inquiry, Mr. Godsil indicated that he objected to any second story and believed the applicant should find another way to add space.

Lauren Halligan, 663 Calle Miramar, expressed concerns about the project's impact on her privacy and about the precedent it would set.

Russell Pierson, 275 Via Linda Vista, stated that he was looking forward to the remodeling of this house, which has been an eyesore for some time, but was concerned about the balcony's impact on his privacy. He suggested that the balcony was unnecessary because the home has a large deck and backyard in which to entertain.

Mr. Gould reported that there are other two-story homes in this neighborhood, so allowing this small second-story addition would not be precedent setting. He explained that the balcony is necessary to provide a landing for the French doors and related his

experience that balconies off master bedrooms are rarely used. He offered to reduce the depth of the balcony from six to four feet.

Ms Laumen stated that she was opposed to any balcony that someone could walk out onto because it would invade her privacy.

A brief discussion ensued, and Commissioners expressed an interest in re-visiting the site to evaluate the impact of the balcony as they were not aware of neighbors' concerns prior to this meeting.

Chairperson Uchima indicated that he could support the project without the balcony, but recommended a continuance if the applicant would like to include it.

Mr. Gould agreed to continue the hearing to April 5, 2006.

MOTION: Commissioner Horwich moved to continue the hearing to April 5, 2006. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Commissioner Busch requested that neighbors, who have concerns about the project, leave contact information with staff.

Sr. Planning Associate Lodan announced that the hearing would not be re-advertised as it was continued to a date certain.

10D. PRE06-00001: NEVILLE MILBURN

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow first and second-story additions to an existing one-story, single-family residence on property located in the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 5608 Clearsite Street.

Recommendation

Approval.

Sr. Planning Associate Lodan introduced the request.

Referring to a scale model, Robert Thibodeau, project architect, voiced objections to reducing the height of the project by two feet (Condition Nos. 3, 4 and 5), explaining that ceiling heights on both floors would have to be reduced to 8 feet, which would make the home feel less spacious. He stated that new homes typically have at least 9-foot ceilings and he felt anything less would detract from the quality of the workmanship. He noted that the project's height as proposed and Floor Area Ratio are under the maximum allowed.

Commissioner Browning reported that he was able to see the silhouette from eight blocks away when driving to the site.

Mr. Thibodeau explained that there are not a lot of large trees on this block so the silhouette appears more prominent, however, this will change as trees mature and more second stories are added. He suggested that it would be very shortsighted to limit this project to 8-foot ceilings.

Commissioner Busch asked about Mr. Thibodeau's claim that 8-foot ceilings are no longer standard. Sr. Planning Associate Lodan advised that the trend is toward higher ceilings, with plate heights of 10 feet on the first floor and 8 or 9 feet on the second. He noted that there are other options for reducing the height of a project, such as reducing the pitch of the roof or grading the lot.

Mr. Thibodeau explained that the roof pitch is at the minimum and suggested that it does not make sense to grade a lot that is flat.

Betty Penner, owner of the property at 5602 Clearsite Street, stated that she does not object to the project but was concerned about the loss of sunlight, noting that her property has already lost sunlight due to a second-story addition on the home to the east.

Mr. Thibodeau stated that any two-story home would impact Ms. Penner's property and that he tried to design a nice home that will enhance the neighborhood.

Commissioner Gibson asked if Ms. Penner lives on the property, and Mr. Thibodeau reported that it is a rental.

Commissioner Browning indicated that he would support the project as proposed because he believed changing the roofline would spoil the design.

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

Commissioner Faulk asked about staff's rationale for recommending the two-foot reduction in height.

Sr. Planning Associate Lodan advised that staff made this recommendation because the reduced height would be more consistent with other two-story homes in the immediate vicinity and because it would help address concerns about sunlight blockage and bulk. He reported that he was under the impression that the applicant had agreed to the height reduction.

The public hearing was briefly reopened so the project architect could comment.

Mr. Thibodeau stated that he had spoken with the applicant earlier in the day and he was not in favor of the height reduction. He reported that there are several other two-story homes on this street, although he didn't know their exact height, and second-story additions are definitely a trend in this neighborhood.

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

A brief discussion ensued regarding the possibility of reducing the pitch of the roof from 3 in 12 to 2 in 12, and Building Regulations Administrator Segovia confirmed that shingles could still be used with a different application process.

Chairperson Uchima expressed concerns that a roof with a 2 in 12 pitch, which is almost flat, would greatly detract from the appearance of the project.

MOTION: Commissioner Busch moved for the approval of PRE06-00001, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff, with the modification that the height shall be as originally proposed without the two-foot reduction.

Planning Assistant Hurd read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 06-042.

MOTION: Commissioner Drevno moved for the adoption of Planning Commission Resolution No. 06-042 as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Horwich and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

The Commission recessed from 8:25 p.m. to 8:35 p.m.

10E. PRE06-00003: EMIL SUNJARA (CYNTHIA ANDRADE)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow the construction of a second-story addition to an existing one-story, single-family residence on property located in the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 5513 White Court.

Recommendation

Continuance for redesign or modification.

Planning Assistant Hurd introduced the request.

Emil Sunjara, project architect, asked for direction for the Commission regarding the project's redesign. Referring to objections from neighbors at 5518 and 5526 Sara Drive, he reported that Cynthia Andrade, the owner of the subject property, discussed the project with these neighbors while it was still in the planning stages and he tried to minimize the impact on them by keeping the height of the project as low as possible. He indicated that he did not favor staff's recommendation to change from a gable roof to a hip roof because it would not allow for vaulted ceilings, which help maintain a feeling of spaciousness in rooms with only an 8-foot plate height, and because it would cost more to build and detract from the architectural design. He stated that staff has recommended shifting the bulk of the addition toward the westerly portion of the residence, however, this would make the home look unbalanced and less attractive, and it could adversely impact another neighbor and lead to new objections. He noted that Ms. Andrade has offered to split the cost of building a higher wall to address privacy concerns at 5518 Sara Drive.

Commissioner Busch asked if Mr. Sunjara had alternative suggestions to address the concerns of neighbors, and Mr. Sunjara proposed eliminating the 4-foot cantilever on the east side and shifting the second floor balcony to the west.

Commissioner Browning reported that he visited 5518 Sara Drive and did not observe a lot of view impact, but noticed that the fireplace on the east side would impact the view to the south.

Mr. Sunjara advised that there was no place to relocate the fireplace that would be aesthetically pleasing, but noted that it would be shifted four feet by eliminating of the cantilever.

Commissioner Horwich stated that he visited 5526 and 5518 Sara Drive and observed only minimal impact and that he could support the project without additional redesign if it is slightly lowered and the balcony is shifted to the west.

Mr. Sunjara explained that the only way to achieve a height reduction would be to change the roof pitch to 2 in 12.

In response to Commissioner Gibson's inquiry, Mr. Sunjara advised that the balcony is 4 feet by 10 feet as currently proposed, but he would like to increase the length by 3-4 feet if it is shifted to the west.

John Whipple, 5602 Marialinda Street, indicated that he was not directly affected by the project, but was concerned about its bulk and potential parking problems. Noting that he recently moved to Torrance from a beach community, he stated that he likes the neighborhood as originally designed, with small homes and large setbacks, and does not want it to change.

Bryan Carichner, 5518 Sara Drive, explained that maintaining privacy was his primary concern; that shifting the balcony to the west should help mitigate the privacy impact; and that he would prefer to plant trees instead of increasing the height of the property line wall as Ms. Andrade proposed. He expressed his willingness to work with the applicant to resolve these issues and indicated that he did not share the concerns of the previous speaker and appreciates it when people improve their homes.

Chairperson Uchima reported that he observed a slight impact on the view of distant hills at 5518 Sara Drive and believed eliminating the four-foot cantilever would go a long way in addressing this. He stated that he did not favor reducing the pitch of the roof to 2 in 12 because it would make the project aesthetically unappealing. He questioned the need for the balcony.

Cynthia Andrade, owner of the subject property, explained that she would like to be able to look out over her pool and believed any privacy concerns would be addressed by shifting the balcony to the west.

Commissioner Busch asked if staff had concerns about Mr. Gould's plan to increase the length of the balcony along with shifting it to the west. Sr. Planning Associate Lodan advised that the balcony's shallow depth makes it an unlikely place for congregating, therefore, increasing its length should not be a problem.

Chairperson Uchima asked if eliminating the 4-foot cantilever and shifting the balcony to the west would address Mr. Carichner's concerns. Mr. Carichner responded that he didn't know because he hadn't had a chance to review the plans.

Mr. Sunjara agreed to continue the hearing to May 3, 2006.

MOTION: Commissioner Drevno moved to continue the hearing on PRE06-00003 to May 3, 2006. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Busch and passed by unanimous roll call votes.

Commissioner Gibson asked that Mr. Carichner be provided with a copy of the revised plans prior to the May 3 meeting.

Commissioner Faulk stressed the importance of working with neighbors to resolve their concerns. Referring to Mr. Whipple's comments, he stated that the Riviera area will continue to change because it is a desirable place to live with many underdeveloped properties and explained that the Hillside Overlay Ordinance was created to lessen the impact of these changes while recognizing that people have a right to improve their properties. He voiced his opinion the proposed project, which is well under the maximum allowed in terms of height, floor area ratio and lot coverage, does a good job of addressing the underlying concerns in the Hillside area.

Chairperson Uchima urged Mr. Sunjara and Ms. Andrade to view the project from the perspective of the two neighbors on Sara Drive who have expressed concerns and to try to mitigate the impact on them as much as possible. He announced that the hearing would not be re-advertised because it was continued to a date certain.

10F. PRE06-00005: TIM AND TRACY BYER

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow one-story additions to an existing one-story, single-family residence on property located in the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 22711 Draille Drive.

Continued to April 5, 2006.

11. **RESOLUTIONS** – None.

12. **PUBLIC WORKSHOP ITEMS** – None.

13. **MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS** – None.

14. **REVIEW OF CITY COUNCIL ACTION ON PLANNING MATTERS**

None.

15. **LIST OF TENTATIVE PLANNING COMMISSION CASES**

Sr. Planning Associate Lodan reviewed the agenda for the April 5, 2006 Planning Commission meeting.

16. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

16A. Commissioner Horwich requested that staff look into whether commissioners can be paid for extra meetings they are required to attend in conjunction with the General Plan Update.

16B. Commissioner Horwich asked about the annual League of California Cities Planning Workshop, which Commissioners are usually invited to attend around this time of year.

16C. Commissioner Horwich reported that he was still having difficulty hearing speakers at the podium and requested that staff look into this matter.

16D. Commissioner Drevno wished everyone a happy St. Patrick's Day.

16E. Commissioner Faulk requested an excused absence from the April 5, 2006 Planning Commission meeting in case he is not back in time from a trip to the NCAA basketball finals.

Commissioner Drevno, seconded by Commissioner Browning, so moved; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

16F. Sr. Planning Associate Lodan discussed the scheduling of a retirement dinner for Jane Isomoto.

17. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:25 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, March 22, 2006 at 7:00 p.m. for a General Plan Workshop in City Council Chambers.

Approved as Submitted May 3, 2005 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
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