

# CITY OF SAN DIMAS PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

Regularly Scheduled Meeting  
Wednesday, October 20, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.  
201 E. Bonita Avenue, Senior Citizen/Community Center Multi-Purpose  
Room

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## **Present**

Chairman Jim Schoonover  
Commissioner David Bratt  
Commissioner John Davis  
Commissioner Stephen Ensberg  
Assistant City Manager for Community Development Larry Stevens  
Assistant Planner Michael Concepcion  
Associate Planner Marco Espinoza  
Planning Commission Secretary Jan Sutton

## **Absent**

Commissioner M. Yunus Rahi

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Schoonover called the regular meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. and Commissioner Bratt led the flag salute.

## **CONSENT CALENDAR**

1. Approval of Minutes: October 6, 2010 (Bratt absent)

**MOTION:** Moved by Ensberg, seconded by Davis to approve the Consent Calendar. Motion carried 3-0-1-1 (Rahi absent, Bratt abstained).

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

2. **RECEIVE PUBLIC COMMENTS ON A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (DEIR) FOR THE BRASADA RESIDENTIAL PROJECT (Public Review Period September 20, 2010 to November 4, 2010)** – A proposed 61 single-family residential development on 273 acres located in the western portion of the Northern Foothills of San Dimas.

*Assistant City Manager Larry Stevens* stated the public comment period for the DEIR began on September 20, 2010 and will conclude on November 4, 2010. Typically the City will hold a hearing during the public comment period to provide an opportunity for people to provide oral comments, which are treated the same as written comments under the CEQA process.

The environmental documents are available for review at Temporary City Hall, the San Dimas Branch of the County Library, and on-line on the City's website.

There are some other aspects to the project, such as amending the General Plan and Specific Plan No. 25, approving the Tentative Tract Map to subdivide the property, and executing a Development Agreement. While the proposed project is the basis for the environmental documents, it is not the topic for the public hearing tonight and comments should be focused on the DEIR or consist of informational questions. He stated the public hearing for the other items is tentatively scheduled for November 17, 2010 and a separate hearing notice will be mailed to everyone that received a notice about tonight's hearing.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated after the City received the preliminary application from the developer, it was determined based on the Initial Study that some of the environmental impacts would be significant and required a certain level of analysis. The City hired an environmental consultant to prepare the required documents under CEQA. All of the work is the product of the City, but has been paid for by the developer. He introduced Kim Howlett and Diane Catalano from PBS&J, the consultants hired by the City, who will be presenting the findings of the DEIR relative to the proposed project.

**Kim Howlett, PBS&J**, stated the proposed project is to subdivide the 273-acre project site into 61 single-family residences, seven common area lots, one 83-acre parcel for potential open space, and related infrastructure. He outlined the seven objectives of the project, including implementation of the Settlement Agreement with NJD by amending the City's General Plan and Specific Plan No. 25, adopting amendments that are sensitive to the unique character of the Northern Foothills, establishing density and development standards while keeping development in less visually intrusive areas and increasing open space.

**Diane Catalano, PBS&J**, explained the process required by CEQA and the nine Technical Studies which were prepared for the EIR. Twelve issues are addressed in the EIR and key topics will be discussed tonight, including aesthetics, air quality, biology, geology and soils, and hazards and hazardous materials. She explained how certain issues were infeasible to mitigate and would remain significant and unavoidable, and how others could be mitigated to less than significant. She also showed four potential emergency access routes on both the east and west sides since currently there is only one direct access route proposed for the project. She then discussed other impacts requiring mitigation such as Historical, Archaeological, Paleontological Resources; Hazards related to Climate Change; Parks and Trails; Transportation Hazards; and Utilities.

As part of the review, Project Alternatives exploring ways that most of the basic project objectives could be attained, while reducing or avoiding significant environmental impacts of the original proposed project, were analyzed. The No Build Alternative is required by CEQA, and would reduce all impacts, but it would not meet any of the project objectives. The Reduced Project Alternative of building only 38 lots would meet or partially meet six of the eight project objectives. The Development Configuration Alternative would have a similar site plan but would reduce the building pad size by 10 percent on each lot. While this would reduce the grading by 300-400,000 cubic yards of cut/fill, it would result in steeper roadway grades; but it would also reduce impacts to several categories and meet all project objectives. The Improved Emergency Access Alternative would maintain the same footprint as the proposed project but would improve up to four offsite emergency access routes to L.A. County Fire Department and/or City standards while still meeting all project objectives. She then explained the public review process, and how once it was concluded the Response to Comments and Final EIR would be prepared and public hearings would be held by the Planning Commission and City Council before approval was granted.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** showed the location of the project north of Foothill Boulevard, up Cataract Avenue along the Glendora city boundary line. The public access to the community gate will be an extension of Cataract and then into private streets. The bulk of the parcels will be in the old stable area which has had buildings in that area in the past. Possible emergency access roads would be on existing motorways. One possible route to the west would be across property the applicant owns in Glendora, while another possibility to the east would cross private property leading to Sycamore Canyon Road. The green area on the map is primarily open space or debris basins and will remain undeveloped. The 80-acre parcel proposed for dedication to the City or for open space will be deed restricted from development. Cross-hatched areas on the map, while under private ownership, would also be restricted from development. The plain yellow areas are future pad areas. He then explained about the debris catch basin systems, and where the new water tank to service the project would be located. This is just the first in a series of public hearings; tonight was to receive comments on the DEIR and then tentatively in November the Planning Commission will be holding the public hearing on the other project components, with a possible hearing before the City Council in December.

**Commissioner Ensberg** asked who actually hired the consulting firm and who determined which categories were necessary for study.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated he interviewed and hired the consulting firm. The areas to study were identified in the Initial Study, and then PBS&J finalized the areas of impact to be analyzed. They have an in-house component which did a majority of the work, and the traffic study was conducted by an outside traffic consultant. There were some additional studies in the Technical Appendices which were performed by the applicant's technical consultants and then peer reviewed by PBS&J.

**Commissioner Ensberg** asked what the process is if something under the Project Alternatives is not accomplished, such as the second access route for emergencies. What happens to the project then?

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated they have currently reviewed the project based on a worse-case scenario, which is a single means of access. If that is the only access provided, then the environmental impact is significant and unavoidable and the process is to disclose that impact. When it comes to the decision-making portion of the process and you have an impact that is significant and unavoidable, then you can adopt over-riding findings. If they can demonstrate there is one satisfactory emergency access, then they could reduce the finding as reasonable with mitigation. He stated they are still working on getting a second means of access.

**Commissioner Ensberg** asked if the second means of access in an area within San Dimas so they have some control over that.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated each of the four alternatives have different situations. The western alternative goes through property owned by the applicant but is in the City of Glendora, so it is uncertain if they can get approval from Glendora and can it be approved to meet the required standards. They have had some discussions with the City of Glendora and will have further discussions, but Glendora has been in litigation with the developer in the past similar to San Dimas, and there currently is no application pending in Glendora's boundaries. The possible access routes to the east would involve going through the County Park, and there has been no response on if that option would be available. The northeast route goes through private property and then the County Park before it arrives at a public road, so there has been no mutually satisfactory resolution to guarantee access on any of the proposed options.

**Commissioner Davis** asked if the secondary access was the only significant issue after construction is completed.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated that is one and the other would be aesthetics. The only way to improve aesthetics was discussed in the Alternatives.

**Commissioner Davis** wanted to clarify that the Alternative were proposed by the City, not the developer.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated all four Alternatives were determined by the City and they tried to identify under CEQA reasonable and feasible alternatives. It is a way to compare the original proposal to other choices and possibilities as part of the decision making process.

**Commissioner Bratt** asked how close the homes on Lots 19 and 20 would be the houses located on Maverick. He also stated it seemed the DEIR addresses slope erosion and sliding during construction but not after completion, and that this area has been prone to landslides in the past. He asked what mitigation measures were proposed for after construction.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated he did not have an exact figure but estimated lots 19 and 20 would be between 700-800 feet away, plus there is a knoll which will block the view to a large part of that area. He stated most of the soils analysis was conducted where disturbance would occur, and then as development occurs, there will be various mitigation measures put in place to control slope erosion. The developer is also avoiding landslide areas so they shouldn't be a factor. If they are properly directing water from the project to the catch basins, the canyon areas should not be exacerbated by the development. While it is a possibility to get slippage over time, it shouldn't be near any homes if the appropriate engineering and geologic practices are followed.

**Commissioner Davis** asked since the developer owns property in Glendora, will there be cumulative impacts to be considered for development in Glendora.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated they don't have to consider cumulative projects until an application has been filed, so the property owned by the developer in Glendora was not analyzed at this time. There is a project that was factored in at Cataract and Foothill for a condominium development, and they looked at that for traffic impacts.

Chairman Schoonover opened the meeting for public comments. Addressing the Commission were:

**Rene Arguelles, 1229 Hidden Creek Road, San Dimas, CA 91773**, who stated as a first responder himself with the L.A. County Sheriff's Department, he felt that having only one emergency access was inadequate. He felt if either of the two possible roads through San Dimas were chosen, then another EIR would need to be done because those routes would cross both public and private property. He felt there would be potential problems if another road was not built for emergency situations.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated they are working diligently on having additional access provided. He stated depending on where it was located would determine if additional EIR analysis was required or if a Mitigated Negative Declaration could be prepared depending on how it was improved, how wide it would be and the impacts on the blue line stream.

**Michael Mohajer, P.O. Box 3334, San Dimas, CA 91773**, stated in regards to the traffic analysis, since the developer has issues with the City of Glendora, and if we don't want to deal

with the potential of traffic coming from the City of Glendora, then it needs to be specified that the City of San Dimas will not allow regular traffic from the west. He was not opposed if the developer wanted to create an emergency access through their property in Glendora, but did not want to see a route through Glendora used for regular access.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated the City of Glendora has included in the Circulation Element of their General Plan a prohibition of public streets crossing city boundary lines, so before regular traffic to San Dimas could ensue, they would need to amend their General Plan. If they were to propose such a change in the future, then it would be appropriately analyzed at that time.

**John LeFave, 2640 E. Country Club Drive, P.O. Box 2329, Glendora, CA 91740**, stated his property backs up to Cataract and his biggest concern was with flooding and landslides, because there have been problems in the past with the private road that currently goes up the hill being flooded by mud, and wanted to know what would be done to correct that with this development.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated that the existing driveway to the house on the San Dimas side will be altered in terms of its location, but the property owner will have a protected easement to allow access to the new road extending off of Cataract. The intent of the design is to capture all of the water that comes down the hills and control it so that there isn't any flooding from the development or any existing sources. They are studying the hydrology carefully and will also have Los Angeles County Flood Control review it before approving the final tract map. The City understands the problem and is endeavoring to address it so there will be no problems once the project is completed.

**Charles Brown, 2778 Terrebonne Avenue, San Dimas, CA 91773**, and president of the Northern Foothills Conservancy, wanted to know how this EIR fits into the Northern Foothills Plan that was adopted several years ago allowing no more than one house per five acres, or one house per lot.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated there some proposed changes to the General Plan and Specific Plan that were done in conjunction with the EIR in 1999, and those changes are identified in detail in Chapter 4.9 of the DEIR. The bulk of the changes are limited to the subject project site, but there will be a couple of minor changes that may affect all of the specific plan area.

**Charles Brown, 2778 Terrebonne**, stated after the Northern Foothills plan was passed, even though the unpaved portion of the Sycamore Canyon Motorway is behind a locked gate, he has noticed a significant amount of traffic going across that road. He is concerned about the impacts of the traffic from 61 homes on Cataract Avenue and Foothill Boulevard. He also wanted to know if they are taking any steps to address what will be done to mitigate the impacts of a partially constructed project if the developer stops and never finishes the project. He also wanted to know if these properties were designed to be horse property and if so, have they considered how they are going to evacuate livestock during emergencies. He also wanted to know how many of these homes would be seen from the freeway, or San Dimas in general, because he was concerned that the hillsides would appear dotted with houses. He felt this was a very steep area which would require massive grading and felt this was an area that was not meant for development because of that steepness.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated the DEIR does not specifically address a partially completed project. Staff is looking at provisions that can be implemented as part of the Tentative Tract Map to minimize impacts to surrounding properties if there is stoppage of the

project mid-construction. He stated only nine of the 61 parcels are designed to be equestrian lots, and the Equestrian Commission has also raised the concern about having a livestock evacuation plan, and this will be addressed further in the Specific Plan. As to how many houses will be seen from lower vantage points, that has not been determined yet. There are some natural topographic features that will obscure some of them, but possibly a third of the homes will be visible. He stated the developer is intending the bulk of homes will have view opportunities and is working to maximize that, while Staff is working on how the view will be from the exterior looking in.

**Sherry Breskin, 1123 Lassen Court, San Dimas, CA 91773**, stated she was concerned with how large the footprints of the houses will be and hoped that they would not be building a tract of McMansions. She was also interested to know if this project would be comprised of mixed housing prices. She was concerned about potential impacts on the habitat areas, and whether this project would be gated off with no public access for people who currently hike or ride their horses in this area. She also wanted to know why the section on Cultural Resources was not available for public viewing and who had access to that section of the DEIR. She was wondering if it was limited because the area had been used as a graveyard for early settlers.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated it is standard in the industry relative to cultural and archeological resources to minimize specific location disclosure information for fear that those sites could be altered, disturbed or visited by people looking for resources in an uncontrolled manner. The sites are identified and recorded with the appropriate state agency, but who has access to that information is very limited to prevent disturbance of the sites. He stated he was not aware of any graveyards in that area.

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated the written responses to the comments received during the comment period will be made available prior to the next set of hearings, and that if anyone had additional questions or concerns, they could also come to the City Hall to discuss them with Staff.

There being no further response, the public comments were closed.

**Chairman Schoonover** reiterated the public review period was from September 20, 2010 to November 4, 2010 so if anyone had any other concerns, they can submit those to Temporary City Hall prior to the close of the review period.

## **ORAL COMMUNICATION**

### **3. Director of Development Services**

**Assistant City Manager Stevens** stated Director Dan Coleman would be returning to work from his leave the first week in November.

### **4. Members of the Audience**

No communications were made.

### **5. Planning Commission**

No communications were made.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** Moved by Ensberg, seconded by Davis to adjourn. Motion carried 4-0-1 (Rahi absent). The meeting adjourned at 8:24 p.m. to the regular Planning Commission meeting scheduled for November 3, 2010.

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Jim Schoonover, Chairman  
San Dimas Planning Commission

ATTEST:

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Jan Sutton, Planning Commission Secretary

Approved: November 3, 2010