CITY OF SAN DIMAS
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES

Regularly Scheduled Meeting
Thursday, February 20, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.
245 East Bonita Avenue, Council Chambers

Present
Chairman Jim Schoonover
Commissioner David Bratt
Commissioner John Davis
Commissioner M. Yunus Rahi
Commissioner Stephen Ensberg
Senior Planner Marco Espinoza
Planning Secretary Jan Sutton

CALL TO ORDER AND FLAG SALUTE

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: February 6, 2014

MOTION: Moved by Ensberg, seconded by Bratt to approve the Consent Calendar. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

PUBLIC HEARING

2. **CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING APPLICATIONS:**
   - **Conditional Use Permit 12-05** – A request for development of an enclosed RV Storage Facility, located at 638 E. Baseline Road, at the southwest corner of Baseline Road and San Dimas Canyon Road (APN: 8661-016-004, 030, 031 & 032).
   - **Modification to Development Standards 12-01** – A request to increase the allowable lot coverage from 35% to approximately 50%, a request to reduce the parking requirements from 30 spaces to 13 spaces based on a performed parking study of a similar facility, and a request to reduce the west side yard setback from 12 feet to 3 feet for an enclosed RV Storage Facility, located at 638 E. Baseline Road, at the southwest corner of Baseline Road and San Dimas Canyon Road (APN: 8661-016-004, 030, 031 & 032).
   - **DPRB Case No. 12-07** – A request to construct a 94,949 sq. ft. enclosed RV Storage Facility consisting of eight structures on a 4.39 acre site, located at 638 E. Baseline Road, at the southwest corner of Baseline Road and San Dimas Canyon Road (APN: 8661-016-004, 030, 031 & 032).

Associated Cases:

- **Lot Line Adjustment 14-01** – A request to move the existing west property line 12 feet to the east, located at 638 E. Baseline Road, at the southwest corner of Baseline Road and San Dimas Canyon Road (APN: 8661-016-004, 030, 031 & 032). (Staff Level Approval with City Council Consent)
- **Lot Merger 12-01** – A request to combine the four lots that encompass the project into one lot, located at 638 E. Baseline Road, at the southwest corner of Baseline Road and San Dimas Canyon Road (APN: 8661-016-004, 030, 031 & 032). (Staff Level Approval)

Staff report presented by ***Senior Planner Marco Espinoza*** who stated there are a number of applications associated with this project, and gave a brief description of the two that will be reviewed at the Staff level. He stated the original proposal in 2010 was for an enclosed RV storage facility with a self-storage component. In the Light Agricultural (AL) zone self-storage was neither permitted nor prohibited, so the Applicant originallysubmitted for a Zone Change and General Plan Amendment since the use was more industrial in nature. When the request to initiate the change went to City Council they asked for further information due to concerns about the change. Subsequently the Applicant held several community meetings with the neighbors to discuss the concerns they had brought up at the Council meeting, and based on those discussions decided to eliminate the self-storage portion of the project. As RV storage is a conditionally permitted use in the AL zone, it helped to streamline the process for the Applicant somewhat.

Senior Planner Espinoza stated the site is located at the southwest corner of Baseline and San Dimas Canyon Roads, and forms a u-shape around the parcel owned and operated by Golden State Water Company, which is not a part of the project. To the west, north and east are residential uses, along with office to the north and plant nurseries to the east, and the 210 Freeway to the south. He stated DPRB Case No. 12-07 is for the construction of a 94,944 sq. ft. RV storage facility with 154 RV garages and 54 accessory storage units to be used by the tenants of the garages. He explained the site layout and stated the architectural style will be Craftsman and will use elements such as Hardie board siding, nine-light windows, stone veneer wainscot, and knee braces at the eaves.

He stated the design was reviewed by the DPRB on three different occasions. The caretaker/office building will face Baseline with the gates located directly to the east before the corner building starts. The building walls will serve as part of the 10-foot high fencing around the perimeter. He showed the west wall plane that is 12’6” at the highest point. They have ensured that all portions seen from the street will have Craftsman elements visible. The Board is recommending approval of the design and site layout only; they did not review the use itself.

The second application is a Modification to Development Standards. The AL zone was created in the 1970s and the permitted uses were quite varied, such as single-family homes, plant nurseries, low-density apartments, Community Park, grazing, etc. Some of these uses were pre-existing and the zone was created to accommodate them. However, there was some thought given to the fact that these large parcels may change over time and be developed into something else, thus a section was added to allow for the modification of development standards. Also, while there wasn’t one existing in the AL zone, the new code conditionally allowed for an RV storage facility.

Senior Planner Espinoza stated the Applicant is requesting to increase the lot coverage from the residential standard of 35% to 50%. The next issue is in regards to the amount of parking needed as the code does not address RV parking requirements. The Applicant submitted a

study of two different facilities, that when averaged at peak hours only needed nine parking spaces. The applicant is proposing to have 15 spaces for the 154 units. The last modification involves a unique situation with the west property line. The original plan showed the required 12-foot setback, but the DPRB was concerned that this would create a double-fence area that would not be maintained by anyone and create a problem area for the residents if people were to get back in there, and the Board felt the setback requirement should be removed. The Applicant worked with the abutting homeowners and was able to create a faux setback by deeding 12 feet to the property owners to the west, and then placing the buildings three feet from the new property line, which in essence creates a 15-foot setback from the current property line. The homeowners have signed an agreement accepting this proposal and granting the Applicant access to the rear of the building for maintenance purposes.

The third application is Conditional Use Permit 12-05 which would allow the actual use of operating an RV facility at the site. Staff is concerned that this use is incompatible with the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Next to the site the zoning is SF-7500 and SFA-16,000. While there is an office building and parking lot to the north, there are also residential lots on Baseline across from the site that will be the most impacted by the proposed use. When the General Plan was last updated in 1991, that area was seen as potentially developing with commercial development as strip centers were more common then but they are not as viable now. Staff feels RV storage is more of an industrial use rather than commercial and may not be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. The concern is if this is approved, it could create a nexus for other industrial uses wanting to locate in a commercial land use area. He explained that even though the zoning was AL, the General Plan designation was Commercial, and the zoning should be in line with the General Plan.

Senior Planner Espinoza stated another concern is that the massing, scale and bulk is also not compatible in relation to the nature of the surrounding single-family neighborhood, as the buildings will be 23' to 28' feet high, with eight- to ten-foot high perimeter walls. While the DPRB recommended approval for the design, it was based on the conjecture that if the project was approved, they wanted to ensure the best possible design for the site. There is also concern about the size of the vehicles coming through the neighborhood on a daily basis.

The purchase of this lot by the Applicant is the first time this property has changed hands in many years, and it was previously used as a plant nursery. Staff feels this site would be better suited to residential, and that it's not required to approve the first application presented if the Commission feels the lot could be developed with something more suitable. In thinking about the compatibility issues, there are findings the Commission needs to make for approval and explained them. Staff feels the findings cannot be met by the project, which combined with the other reasons is why they are recommending denial of the Conditional Use Permit. If denied, the other applications will be denied as well. If the Commission feels the compatibility findings can be met and approves the project, the other applications will also be approved.

Commissioner Ensberg asked if this site was considered for future housing under the recent Housing Element.

Senior Planner Espinoza stated it was not one of the identified parcels for affordable housing.

Commissioner Ensberg stated the City has regulations that limit where people can store RVs on their own property which caused some residents to have to store them off-site. He felt this could provide someplace nearby for residents to keep their RVs that can't be stored on their own property.

Senior Planner Espinoza concurred this would help residents who can afford this type of facility and that Staff would be in support of the proposal if it was in an industrial zone and not a single-family zone.

Commissioner Davis stated that the zone was not single-family, that it was commercial.

Senior Planner Espinoza stated the zone is AL, which does allow for a single-family residence, but he is also referring to the neighborhood being zoned single-family.

Commissioner Ensberg stated at the last meeting they discussed two proposals and the Commission expressed concerns about the proposed three-story structures being incompatible with the surrounding neighborhood and Staff didn't seemed concerned about that, and asked why there seemed to be an issue with compatibility now that wasn't expressed in the other cases.

Senior Planner Espinoza stated the items at the last meeting were to just initiate the applications for review. There was no recommendation made by Staff on whether what was being proposed was appropriate or not; that would come later after an analysis was made and Staff may not necessarily support having a three-story project. The request at the last meeting was to determine if the proposal to change the zone was reasonable enough to have a discussion about it.

Commissioner Davis asked how high the tallest building would be.

Senior Planner Espinoza stated the tallest buildings are the corner building and the office/caretaker building at 28 feet. On average most are 20 to 25 feet tall.

Commissioner Davis stated then they are the height of a typical two-story house.

Chairman Schoonover stated Building E along the west property line was only 12 feet tall.

Senior Planner Espinoza clarified that behind the 25-foot tall tower element, that rest of building would be 12 feet tall.

Chairman Schoonover stated when Staff states they feel single-family is appropriate for the location, what do they envision developing on a 4.4 acre site like this, and how would that compare with the proposal for residential on Foothill Boulevard.

Senior Planner Espinoza stated it would just be speculation, but when they originally received the application, Staff drew a rough site plan in a u-shape design that could fit approximately 12-15 homes on roughly 7,500 square foot lots with a two-story home. The proposed lot size for the project on Foothill is approximately 3,000 square feet.

Commissioner Rahi asked if the property on the east side of San Dimas Canyon Road is zoned commercial.

Senior Planner Espinoza stated that property is located in unincorporated Los Angeles County so he did not know the zoning, but it is currently developed with two plant nurseries and single-family residential.

Commissioner Bratt asked what is the main use in AL zoned properties, and if the concern was that approving this project could open the door for other industrial-type uses in the AL zone, where are the other locations with this zoning.

Senior Planner Espinoza went over the permitted and conditionally permitted uses in the AL zone. Staff's concern is with someone wanting to place an industrial-type use in a commercial area as designated by the General Plan, which is a higher level of approval, as opposed to a particular zone. Most of the commercial areas are located along Foothill Boulevard, Arrow Highway and Bonita Avenue. There are a handful of AL properties scattered around the City, but as an example, there is an AL property on Walnut Avenue, but the underlying General Plan designation is Single-Family. There is another that is zoned AL but the General Plan designation is Open Space. Neither of these properties may be as impacted by this decision because their General Plan designation is not commercial, unlike the subject site. The concern is more about properties that are designated Commercial by the General Plan that may be in different zones.

Commissioner Davis stated this seemed to be the first time that he has heard the argument that the General Plan has a higher authority than the zoning and that the Commission should be concerned about incompatibility.

Senior Planner Espinoza stated usually within San Dimas the zoning is aligned with the General Plan as required. However, the majority of the properties within the AL zone are mostly large parcels developed under the County's standards before incorporation, and the permitted and conditionally permitted uses were based on many of the already existing uses on the property. As these large parcels become available, the City is trying to deal with them on a case by case basis for the most appropriate development.

Chairman Schoonover opened the public hearing. Addressing the Commission were:

Ariel Valli, 12 Journey #270, Aliso Viejo, Architect, stated they believe they have a good project and hopes the Commission will approve it. They do not agree with the staff report on the land use issue. He has been designing this type of facility for 30 years and this is one of the finest he has done and feels it fits with the City's design theme and the scale is to a residential level. They have worked with the three neighbors to the west to accommodate them as best as they can. The design helps to secure the site and protect the property of the people who rent there. While the building coverage is about 50%, there is a very low need for parking and they do not find that to be a problem. The building setbacks are in conformance with the code, and they will provide new public improvements along Baseline. The 20-foot landscape setback will be planted with trees, shrubs and groundcover, including 10 large trees along San Dimas Canyon Road and Baseline which will help make it more compatible with the surrounding residential.

Ken Hatch, Owner, stated he and his brother knew Mr. Lodder and bought the parcel from him when it became available. They met with Dan Coleman to show him their proposal and he told them he was in favor of it and could support it. However, when it was turned over to Staff to process, he felt there was a bias against it. When they followed the process as outlined by Staff and submitted the proposal to City Council for the amendments they were denied. He felt it should have been approved because the General Plan on both sides of San Dimas Canyon Road are designated as Commercial. They looked at developing residential as an option, but after getting cost estimates from a contractor it was not financially feasible. They also looked at options such as a convalescent facility and higher density residential but were denied. The City Council asked them to hold community meetings, which they did. They went before the DPRB three times until they were able to work through all the issues. He felt this project meets a need in the City. In regards to traffic on Baseline, he felt most of the traffic will be on San Dimas Canyon and Foothill because there are too many low-hanging trees on Baseline. They felt their project will be a good transition to the residential neighborhood and a good project overall for the City.

Ariel Valli, Architect, stated an RV storage facility is a low-intensity land use and a low traffic generator. The hours of operation are being restricted in deference to the community and the neighbors on the west. Indoor RV storage is a clean use of the property and the on-site manager will add to the security. He felt this was a better use than residential because they will not be impacted by the freeway traffic noise and the neighboring pump station. Residential generates more noise than their facility will, and a 12-foot tall wall has less impact than having a two-story house next door.

Commissioner Bratt asked what types of trees are going to be planted around the perimeter. He also asked what the two smaller storage areas on the southeast and southwest corners were for.

Senior Planner Espinoza stated the landscape plans are still in the preliminary stage but the suggestions for the larger trees are Coastal Live Oaks and London plane.

Ariel Valli, Architect, stated as those areas will not accommodate RV parking, it will allow people to store smaller things like water skis and equipment related to the RV.

Commissioner Bratt asked if there are going to be restrictions on what can be stored there because his fear is that the RV owners will use them for general storage, and then you have the same issue of people coming in on a continual basis since they are using it as a regular storage garage. He wanted to know if they could restrict it to only RV type uses.

Ariel Valli, Architect, stated the intention is that it will be for RV related items only and it will be up to the manager to write up the contracts that way.

Commissioner Bratt asked about the 15-foot setback on the west and who would be maintaining that area.

Ariel Valli, Architect, explained the process they went through to find a solution to that area and meet the setback requirement. He stated the three property owners would be maintaining that area as it will be part of their backyards.

Ken Hatch, Owner, stated in regards to the two corner storage areas, that was something they added while working through the site plan and he was not opposed to removing them if they were an issue. In regards to the west setback area, the homeowners will have the right to landscape and use the land but they will have a right to come through the residential properties during business hours with proper notification to maintain the back of the building.

Commissioner Davis asked if they had considered putting the ingress and egress on San Dimas Canyon Road.

Ariel Valli, Architect, stated they looked at that option but the traffic on that street travels too fast and the frontage is too narrow to accommodate the vehicles.

Vickie Rittner, 435 E. Baseline Road, stated she may have more information regarding this project than others in attendance tonight because she has taken the time to study the item, but asked on behalf of members of the audience who may not know whether they were in favor of the project or not if they will be able to ask questions in order to form an opinion.

Chairman Schoonover stated the community meetings hosted by the Applicant would have been the time to do that.

Bob Scofield, 910 Bayfield Drive, stated he lives one block east of San Dimas Canyon on the north side of Allen Avenue, and has been a resident there for 43 years. He retired last year after 44 years as a Ralphs truck driver so he is familiar with large vehicles. He has also owned a diesel pusher RV that is similar to a Greyhound bus for the last six years which he keeps at the Eastshore RV Park at Bonelli Park. When he goes there several times a month to charge his batteries he only sees a few RVs coming in or out during a four hour period. When he brings his RV home to prepare for a trip, he would never consider driving down Baseline Road due to the low-hanging trees and lack of traffic control signals at the major intersections. People with large RVs will always choose to travel to signalized intersections on major streets because it is easier for them to maneuver. He did not think there will be much traffic between San Dimas Avenue and the facility for those reasons and that most people will take San Dimas Canyon to Foothill.

Rudy Lopez, 548 Cheyenne Drive, stated he has lived there since 1977. He is not really opposed or in favor of the project, but his main concern is the height of the wall on the west building and the impact it will have on his view of the mountains. He has spoken to the owner and was told they might be able to change the height of the wall on the corner. Otherwise, he thought it was a good looking project.

Senior Planner Espinoza stated a condition was discussed at DPRB for the Applicant to work with Staff to reduce the wall in that area but they will have to look at the grading plan first to see if it is feasible because the grade change is less towards the east. There is no guarantee that they can save the view but the intent is to try and make an effort to do so.

Cindy Hogan, 516 Cheyenne, stated she is not totally against the project but does have some concerns. She stated it has been repeatedly said that the property north of the site is commercial but there are homes there east of the water company. She was also concerned about the ingress and egress onto Baseline Road because it is narrow there and she has heard no mention of street improvements in the area. She stated the intersection of Baseline and San Dimas Canyon Roads was a blind intersection and is difficult to see oncoming traffic heading south from Foothill, and that it might be better to move the entrance to San Dimas Canyon Road. She disagreed with the speaker who stated people will go up to Foothill instead of using Baseline and thought that westbound traffic will take Baseline to get to San Dimas Avenue. She stated when she attended previous meetings with Mr. Witt the planner there indicated they would like to see all the property on the north side of Baseline become commercial. Now her neighborhood would be wedged between commercial property and the freeway and didn't think that is what the City wanted for them. She would like to see something else built on the site, but if they can do this reasonably, she is okay with it. She also wanted to make sure they did not have an impact from any light on the property.

Ginger Wallenbrock, 1583 Middleton, stated she owns a house on San Dimas Canyon Road across from the facility. She did not have a problem with the proposal but wondered why no one has mentioned the Water Company and why their lot was unbuildable.

Senior Planner Espinoza stated there is a water pump located on the parcel owned by Golden State Water.

Ginger Wallenbrock stated there is a large pipe there. She stated she is restricted on where she can plant and locate her barn. She tried to buy a parcel in 2002 for a workshop but the Water Company (MWD) told her absolutely not, that nothing can be built there. She stated she was waiting to hear that the Water Company was okay with the project because her understanding is there are pipes all over there which is why the pump is there.

Senior Planner Espinoza stated Staff is aware of a 40-foot MWD easement that goes through the subject property near the northeast corner which is why there isn't a building located there. The MWD and Golden State Water have reviewed the plans and have not submitted any objections. The owner must receive approval from Golden State Water, MWD and Caltrans stating they approve the design as the project abuts their properties. The MWD has been involved in this project since the beginning so they are aware of all aspects of the proposal.

Marc Rittner, 435 E. Baseline Road, stated he is not opposed to the project but had comments. East Baseline Road reflects the City's western atmosphere with the large oak trees and quiet street. He recognizes the property owner's right to develop but felt there will be an impact from traffic. They already experience noise from the freeway and he did not want to hear large RVs going by all the time. He would like a condition that makes the facility encourage the occupants to use San Dimas Canyon Road and not Baseline Road. There is also a horse trail along Baseline and felt the large RVs would upset the horses as they go by. He was glad to hear there will be oaks in the landscape plan as Baseline has some of the oldest oak trees in the community. He felt the building looked like a fortress compound and hoped that the trees will help to soften the look, but would prefer it to be like a single-family neighborhood. He was also concerned with a large cactus that could be 100 years old and hoped that it would be relocated instead of destroyed.

Commissioner Bratt asked if a sign could be added to the driveway indicating right-turn only upon exiting. He stated he has driven tractor-trailers and if he was coming out of that lot, he would turn right to go to San Dimas Canyon Road. Taking Baseline might make sense to someone that drives a car, but anyone that drives a large RV will want to go to where there are signals.

Senior Planner Espinoza stated it would have to be reviewed by the traffic engineers because a sign doesn't necessarily prohibit left-hand turns. It might be possible to design the exit so that you can only exit to the right, but it would need to be studied to see if it can be done.

Commissioner Rahi stated maybe the Applicant can provide an estimate of how much traffic would be occurring during peak hours, or the daily traffic amount.

Cindy Hogan, 516 Cheyenne, stated she had worked with Terry Dipple regarding the noise from the freeway. That might also be a consideration on Baseline because ever since the soundwall went up it has made a tunnel from west to east which carries the noise and the RVs could add to that. She was also concerned that if someone travelling westbound on Baseline changed their mind and wanted to go back then they might turn down her street. There could be problems because the intersection of Cheyenne and Arapaho does not have any traffic control devices establishing right-of-way. She has worked for architects, engineers, contractors, etc. in her career and was concerned that the property owners abutting the property who gave permission for workers to enter would be held liable for any injuries and wanted to be sure the project's insurance would protect them.

Ariel Valli, Architect, stated the study they submitted was accurate and contained all the information necessary. He also felt it will make more sense for people to use San Dimas Canyon Road and Foothill Boulevard rather than Baseline Road. He added it will be part of the agreement with the neighboring property owners that they will not be liable for any injuries to workers hired by the RV facility for maintaining the buildings.

Commissioner Davis asked if he knew what was going to happen to the cactus.

Ariel Valli, Architect, stated if it is in the parkway area, it will be left where it is, but if it is where the public improvements need to be, then it will have to be removed.

There being no further comments, the public hearing was closed.

Senior Planner Espinoza stated in regards to public improvements, the Applicant will do full improvements on Baseline Road and in front of the pump station if they can work things out with Golden State Water. The lighting on the property will be down lighting and will be located on the buildings, not on high parking lot poles, so the lighting impacts should be minimal.

Commissioner Ensberg felt Staff's objection is an example of the perfect getting in the way of the good. He felt the project supports the City's policy in regards to RV parking. He is not hearing any outright opposition to the project, just concerns that can be addressed within the conditions, and he wanted to be respectful of the owner being able to develop the property to the best use. He also felt that based on the current zoning there was no need to wait for something else to come along and was in support of the project.

Commissioner Davis stated he was concerned about traffic on Baseline and asked if there was a way to restrict the size of vehicle that could travel on it.

Senior Planner Espinoza stated they can look at a possible design for the entrance but they would not want to limit the size of vehicle because then you are also restricting the people who live on Baseline that may own RVs themselves.

Commissioner Rahi stated the site has been vacant for some time and the neighbors do not seem to have any strong objections and that he could support the project.

Commissioner Bratt concurred and felt the homeowners' concerns can be addressed through the conditions.

Chairman Schoonover stated in regards to whether this should be a residential area, when he looks at the zoning map it seems that the residential zone stops at this lot. Across the street on the north is a large parking lot and the water company, and the few small homes on the corner seem out of place. He is also concerned about putting residential up against the freeway, and the proposals they have seen lately have been large homes on small lots. When he thinks about what is the best use, and considers the City's regulations regarding RV parking, he felt this was needed and was the best use. He did not think much traffic would go down Baseline because most people are going to want to use a signalized intersection to get to the freeway.

MOTION: Moved by Ensberg, seconded by Bratt that the Findings for Approval can be met and directed Staff to bring back resolutions approving Conditional Use Permit 12-05, Modification to Development Standards 12-01 and DPRB Case No. 12-07 at the next meeting. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

ORAL COMMUNICATION

3. **Assistant City Manager for Community Development**
No communications were made.

4. **Members of the Audience**
No communications were made.