DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW BOARD
MINUTES
November 12, 2015 at 8:30 A.M.
245 EAST BONITA AVENUE
CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM, CITY HALL

PRESENT

David Bratt, Planning Commission
Scott Dilley, Chamber of Commerce
Ken Duran, Assistant City Manager
Krishna Patel, Director of Public Works
John Sorcinelli, Public Member at Large
Larry Stevens, Assistant City Manager of Community Development

STAFF

Steve Barragan, Associate Engineer
Anne Nguyen, Planning Aide
Luis Torrico, Associate Planner

ABSENT

Emmett Badar, Council Member

CALL TO ORDER

David Bratt called the regular meeting of the Development Plan Review Board to order at 9:02 a.m. so as to conduct regular business in the City Council Conference Room.

Tree Removal Permit No. 15-54

A request to remove up to 70 trees as a part of the Golden Hills Road Realignment Project, which is a City project. Based on the circumference of the trunk 52 of the trees qualify as "mature significant trees" while the other 23 do not (8 inches or greater for Oaks and 10 inches or greater for all other tree species). A tree replacement plan is also proposed.

Russ Sullivan, La Verne Resident from 5140 Packfield Ln., was present.
Sabina Sullivan, La Verne Resident from 5140 Packfield Ln., was present.
Greg Huff, La Verne Resident from 7085 Linda Ln., was present.
Mike Huff, La Verne Resident from 7085 Linda Ln., was present.

Associate Planner Luis Torrico stated the City is the applicant for this Tree Removal Permit application. The tree removal request is part of a road construction project which consists of the following:

1. Golden Hills Road is currently a narrow low-volume winding road that has experienced severe erosion and landslides and has been closed to through traffic since 2010.
2. The City plans to abandon the current road and construct a new all-weather road with a sidewalk just south of the existing road. The new road will generally follow the existing driveway used by the Los Angeles County Flood Control District at their debris placement site.
3. The new road will be accessed from San Dimas Canyon Road in the City of San Dimas and Golden Hills Road in the City of La Verne.
4. The new road will require the removal of up to 70 trees (See Exhibit B); of the 70 trees 47 meet the minimum requirement to be classified as a "mature significant tree" within the City's Tree Ordinance.

The City hired Rincon Consultants, Inc. who has a certified arborist on staff to prepare a comprehensive report of the proposed trees to be removed. Their arborist prepared a survey of all the trees affected in the project area. Each tree was located, tagged, photographed and analyzed. Seventy-five trees were surveyed and 70 of those trees were identified to be potentially in need of removal in order to allow for the construction of the new road and sidewalk. All the trees are in the City of San Dimas except for one; tree number 5 is in the City of La Verne. The City of La Verne is working with the City of San Dimas on the road project and has reviewed the arborist report. Their Staff concurs with the number of trees proposed to be removed including the one tree within their city boundary. The City of La Verne does have a Tree Preservation Ordinance but has allowed the City of San Dimas to incorporate the removal of the one tree into the scope of this application. Staff has obtained a copy of the City of La Verne's Tree Preservation Ordinance and has reviewed their findings for removal of trees and their tree replacement ratios which are similar to San Dimas's.

As mentioned, of the 70 trees potentially proposed for removal 47 meet the minimum requirement to be classified as a "mature significant tree" within the City's Tree Ordinance.

The other 23 trees that do not qualify as mature trees were still analyzed as part of the arborist report due to the large number and their comprehensive visual effect to the site once removed.

Of the 47 mature trees, 24 of them are considered non-native (Blue Gum, Scotch Pines & Peruvian Pepper). Of the 24 non-native, 21 of them are in poor or declining health, providing a minimal aesthetic value to the community along Golden Hills Road.

Issues Staff would like to address the Tree Replacement Plan – The City Tree Preservation Ordinance requires at 2:1 tree replacement for each tree removed. Based on the Code, if Staff applied the replacement requirements for the 70 trees removed, the tree replacement requirement would be 140 trees at a minimum size of 15 gallon. If Staff applied the same requirements to just the "mature trees" the tree replacement requirement would be 94 trees.

The arborist report recommends a tree replacement plan be prepared as part of the approval of the Tree Permit. The report mentions that the 23 Coast Live Oaks and the one Toyon to be removed be replaced at a 2:1 ratio and the other 24 non-native tree species be replaced at a 1:1 ratio for a total of 70 replacement trees. The report also recommends that the replacement trees all be Oak Trees.

Staff feels that a tree reduction is appropriate for this project as the allowable area for the tree replacement is limited to the area between the old road and the new road only

Due to the limited amount of planting area, the fact that not all the tree in this area are proposed to be removed, and that Staff does not want to over saturate the area with too many replacement trees which would not allow for proper tree growth, Staff thinks requiring 70 replacement trees as mentioned in the arborist report should be reduced. Staff has visited the site and determined that the site can appropriately handle the growth of 25 Oak trees. The replacement trees should be of a 15 gallon and 24" box size to allow for a variety of growth from the replacement trees.

Staff recommends the Board approve the removal of up to 70 trees with a tree replacement plan of 25 trees, 13 being 24 inch box and 12 being 15 gallon in size; all the trees shall be Coast Live Oaks.

****A site visit by the Board was done to Golden Hills Road on Thursday, November 12, 2015 at 8:00 am.**

Mr. Duran asked about the one tree in La Verne, if it will be upheld to the planting ratio of 4:1.

Mr. Stevens stated City of La Verne has the same ability as San Dimas in which they may adjust tree ratios based on circumstance. There is only one tree in La Verne and they have allowed us to make the judgment in regards to the replacement ratio of that tree.

Associate Engineer Barragan noted the one tree in La Verne is tree number five.

Mr. Bratt asked how the new trees will be watered.

Mr. Patel stated crews will use a water truck to water the new trees until they are established.

Mr. Bratt asked how often the trees will be watered.

Mr. Patel stated crews will follow direction from the City Arborist in terms of how often to water the newly planted oak trees.

Mr. Duran asked the proposed species for replacement.

Associate Planner Torrico stated all replacement trees will be oak trees.

Mr. Stevens asked why there was a reduction of ratio.

Associate Planner Torrico stated that Staff believed anything over 25 will over saturate area and not allow the oaks to grow to their full potential.

Mr. Stevens asked how much land would be vacated.

Associate Planner Torrico stated he measured it to be about four acres.

Mr. Sorcinelli asked if old Golden Hills Road is abandoned, will there be a plan to use the road in the future. He believes using the road for pedestrians or bike riders would be favorable for the area.

Mr. Stevens noted the Board should avoid the term abandonment. The City is just switching road alignment.

Mr. Patel stated Staff is looking at title reports to look into options after vacating the road.

Mr. Stevens stated that he believes it would be better to not formally vacate the old Golden Hills Road. Maybe, Staff modifies the improvement plan so the road may be kept for pedestrians and bike riders. That way it would keep pedestrians off the new Golden Hills Road. He mentioned he needed to bring the issue at hand back to light as he has reservations about reducing the replacement tree ratio.

Mr. Sorcinelli asked if the Board will see a plan come back with what will happen to old Golden Hills Road

Mr. Stevens stated that if the Board asks, then yes.

Mr. Sorcinelli stated he would like a plan for old Golden Hills Road to come back to the Board.

Mr. Duran asked how the plan with old Golden Hills Road relates to the tree removal plan being presented today.

Mr. Stevens stated that what happens with old Golden Hills Road could affect the replacement plan. If the City were to keep old Golden Hills Road, the replacement trees could be used to enhance the area and that would be something to take into consideration.

Mr. Sorcinelli believes that the old road, new road and tree replacement plan should be looked at together.

Mr. Stevens stated in speaking with some La Verne residents, their concern is the block of trees near Linda Lane. He asked if there was any way to save those trees. He assumes if there was a way to move the street north to save those trees, that the option was already reviewed and decided against. The other possibility would be to break up the slope by adding retaining walls and pushing the slope away from the trees.

Mr. Patel stated the grade is 16%. The difference between Linda Lane and the road is 35 feet. Also, there are two power poles Staff will be working between.

Mr. Duran asked if the slope below Linda Lane could handle more trees. He noted that additional trees may help to preserve the slope.

Mr. Patel stated yes, Staff and the City Arborist could look into adding replacement trees to the slope.

Mr. Stevens asked if the City could water that area of the slope.

Mr. Patel stated crews would use City water because it is San Dimas's jurisdiction. He added that City crews would water for a few years until the trees could maintain themselves.

Mr. Stevens asked about the two power poles the new road will go between, asking if they need to be moved.

Mr. Patel stated the poles need to be left where they are.

Mr. Sorcinelli stated there does not seem to be any advantage to moving the poles; they are in a good location already.

A discussion continued between Staff and residents about different possibilities for realigning and redesigning the current design for the new Golden Hills Rd. Ideas were presented such as bridges, retaining walls, sharper curves, and even traffic slowing techniques with islands of trees in the roadway. It was brought up that Public Works could show the La Verne residents the original designs for the new Golden Hills Road, so the residents may see that multiple designs that were originally considered. La Verne residents asked that safety be a main concern as San Dimas moves forward with the Golden Hills Road project.

Mike Huff, La Verne Resident from 7085 Linda Ln. asked about the road going between the two poles. He mentioned tree number four is marked for removal; he asked if it could be saved because it is south of the power pole. His property will be greatly impacted by the tree removal and he would just like to keep as many trees as possible.

Mr. Patel stated Staff can look into adding a retaining wall in this area to try to keep a few more of the trees. He adds that many times engineers are leery of placing retaining walls next to trees as roots can cause a great deal of damage. Staff can plot tree number four to see about saving it.

Mike Huff, La Verne Resident from 7085 Linda Ln. believes tree number five is on his property.

Mr. Stevens stated tree number five is shown as an encroachment and not as a removal.

Mike Huff, La Verne Resident from 7085 Linda Ln. stated he is aware that the majority of the trees will go.

Mr. Patel stated that Staff would look at tree number four.

Associate Engineer Barragan noted that he believes the resident is referring to tree number five in this case.

Mr. Stevens stated he believes the Board needs to determine a replacement ratio and ask Staff to look into moving the road alignment.

Mike Huff, La Verne Resident from 7085 Linda Ln. stated he understands the City does not want to overplant. He suggested that the extra trees be planted elsewhere in the City.

Mr. Stevens noted the City plants a number of undocumented trees throughout the year so he does not find that suggestion necessary. He suggested the replacement term of 50% of the usual replacement numbers; an adjusted ratio of 1:1 for San Dimas and 2:1 for La Verne. He noted that with the removal of up to 70 trees, it is in the City's best interest to see if any of those trees could be preserved. He added he would be content to leave the replacement plan to be reviewed by Staff and would ask Public Works to review alternate street alignments with the La Verne residents.

Russ Sullivan, La Verne Resident from 5140 Packfield Ln. asked about the size of the replacement trees.

Mr. Stevens stated that 15 gallon replacements would be sufficient.

Russ Sullivan, La Verne Resident from 5140 Packfield Ln. stated that a 15 gallon size is tough if it is not on a regular irrigation plan.

Mr. Stevens stated the City Arborist will be overseeing all the trees for this project. The arborist has a great eye and inspects each trees health before accepting it off the truck. Staff has found that a 15 gallon tree has a better chance at survival.

Mr. Duran asked to clarify the number, 70.

Associate Planner Torrico stated that up to 70 trees will be removed. He noted that 75 trees were surveyed.

Mr. Stevens stated that Staff understands that not all trees surveyed are significant. He said if the City removes 70 trees, then 71 trees should be replaced. He mentioned that it does not matter how many trees are planted, they will all be watered by the City's water truck. He hopes for a reasonable survival rate.

Russ Sullivan, La Verne Resident from 5140 Packfield Ln. asked if there were to be a guarantee of survival.

Mr. Stevens stated that if a tree dies, it will be replaced.

Mr. Patel added the trees in the area between old Golden Hills Road and the new Golden Hills Road will be maintained by the City.

Mr. Stevens asked if that area was County land.

Mr. Patel replied yes, the area north of the new Golden Hills Road is County land.

Mr. Stevens stated the County would give San Dimas a maintenance easement.

Mr. Patel replied yes, the County will grant San Dimas a maintenance easement.

Mr. Sorcinelli asked if the Board is just agreeing to the ratio.

Mr. Stevens stated the Board is only to look at the tree issue at this time. He goes on to say the motion states Staff would review the replacement plan to determine if that number is appropriate and that result would be factored into the final decision for City Council.

Mr. Sorcinelli asked if the next point of contact for this item is City Council.

Mr. Stevens stated yes, the City Council needs to adopt the negative declaration for the conditions of tree removal. City Council will have the final decision. San Dimas is taking the lead on this project while La Verne is overseeing the project. City council will be asked to affirm this project.

Mr. Sorcinelli asked who will "ok" the street alignment.

Mr. Stevens stated the street alignment is overseen by the Engineering Staff. The scope of the Boards authority is only to look at the tree removal. He proposed that up to 70 trees be removed with up to 71 replacement trees to be reviewed by Staff. Public Works is to share their street alignment plans with the La Verne residents. Replacement trees are to be oak trees, no smaller than 15 gallons.

Mr. Duran added that uses for old Golden Hills Road be explored for pedestrians and bike riders.

Mr. Stevens stated he does not believe the new Golden Hills Road will have room for bicycles and cars. By using old Golden Hills Road for bicycles, it may keep them off the new Golden Hills Road.

Mr. Sorcinelli asked if it would it make more sense to have a bike path rather than a sidewalk.

Mr. Stevens asked Mr. Patel if Staff had looked into a bike path rather than a sidewalk.

Mr. Patel stated no, Staff had not. But he will ask Staff to do so.

Mr. Bratt stated there was a motion made by Mr. Stevens. He asked if there was a second.

Mr. Duran second.

Motion: Larry Stevens moved, second by Ken Duran to approve the project subject to conditions of approval and the modifications including:

1) Tree removal of up to 70 trees with a replacement ratio of 1:1 for trees located in San Dimas and a 2:1 ratio for the single tree located in La Verne; for a possible replacement total of up to 71 trees.
2) All replacement trees are to be 15 gallon Oak Trees.
3) Public Works is to share their alternative street alignment plans with La Verne residents prior to finalizing plans.
4) Public Works Staff to evaluate use for "Old Golden Hills Road".

Motion carried 4-1-1-1 (Sorcinelli no, Patel abstain, Badar absent)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 10:02 a.m. to the meeting of December 10, 2015 at 8:30 a.m.

David Bratt, Chariman
San Dimas Development Plan Review Board

ATTEST:

Development Plan Review Board
Departmental Assistant

Approved: 01/14/2016