



PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

Regular Meeting
August 19, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers
701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025

CALL TO ORDER – 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL – Bressler, Eiref (Vice Chair), Ferrick, Kadvany (Chair), Onken, Riggs, Strehl (Absent)

INTRODUCTION OF STAFF – Rachel Grossman, Associate Planner, Justin Murphy, Development Services Manager; Kyle Perata, Assistant Planner

A. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

A1. Update on Pending Planning Items

- a. Housing Element – Steering Committee Meeting #2 - August 26, 2013

Development Services Manager Murphy announced the second Housing Element-Steering Committee meeting would occur on August 26 from 6 to 9 p.m.

- b. General Plan – City Council – August 27, 2013

Development Services Manager Murphy said the City Council would kick off the process for updating the General Plan at their August 27, 2013 meeting and at that meeting focus on land use and circulation elements.

- c. SRI Campus Modernization Project - Updated Draft Public Outreach and Development Agreement Negotiation Process – City Council – August 27, 2013

Development Services Manager Murphy said as noted in the staff report on the SRI Campus Modernization Project that the City Council would consider the Project's Updated Draft Public Outreach and Development Agreement Negotiation Process at their August 27, 2013 meeting.

He said a fourth item not listed was that the City had received a demolition permit application for the Park Theater on El Camino Real that was being reviewed. He said there was the question of whether it was a historical resource, and a review has determined that the building no longer maintains its historical integrity. He said the technical requirements of the demolition permit were underway including asbestos abatement compliance with Bay Area Air Quality District requirements. He said if the permit complies with all requirements that demolition would proceed.

Commissioner Bressler asked if staff had information on discussion in the community about the 500 El Camino Real Stanford project and a driveway extension that would be constructed under the railroad tracks to Alma Street. Development Services Manager Murphy said he had no information about that. Commissioner Bressler said that Senior Planner Rogers had indicated such a construct would not conform to the Specific Plan. Development Services Manager Murphy said he could also confirm that statement.

Commissioner Ferrick reported the first Housing Element – Steering Committee meeting was held and noted the Committee’s two focuses were locating a homeless shelter and creating a secondary dwelling unit amnesty program.

Commissioner Eiref asked if the Council’s consideration of the circulation part of the General Plan would look at El Camino Real traffic. Development Services Manager Murphy said there was a separate work program specifically related to El Camino Real traffic that was a near term project over the current fiscal year while the General Plan Update would occur over multiple years. He said hopefully there would be clarity on El Camino Real traffic circulation prior to the environmental impact report for the General Plan Update. He said that potentially staff could provide an update on the El Camino Real traffic project at the Commission’s next meeting. Commissioner Eiref suggested that having that project complete before the reviews of the El Camino Real Stanford project would be helpful. Development Services Manager Murphy said the El Camino Real traffic project that was funded under the City’s Capital Improvement Program, as he recalled, was expected to take a year to complete.

B. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were none.

C. CONSENT

C1. Approval of minutes from the July 22, 2013 Planning Commission meeting

Chair Kadvany noted a small change he would like made on page 16, the 5th paragraph, last line: Replace “those directions” with “that ambiguity.”

Commission Action: M/S Kadvany/Bressler to approve the minutes with the following modification.

- Page 16, 5th paragraph, last line: Replace “those directions” with “that ambiguity”.

Motion carried 4-0 with Commissioners Ferrick and Riggs abstaining and Commissioner Strehl absent.

D. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT SCOPING SESSION

- D1. Review and comment on the Notice of Preparation (NOP) to identify the content of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to be prepared for the following project:

General Plan Amendment, Zoning Ordinance Amendment, Rezoning, Lot Reconfiguration, Abandonment of Reserved Right-of-Way, Amended and Restated Conditional Development Permit, Development Agreement, Heritage Tree Removal Permits, Environmental Review/SRI International/333 Ravenswood Avenue:

General Plan Amendment and Zoning Ordinance Amendment to create a new General Plan land use designation and a new zoning district that would allow for the redevelopment of the existing 63.2-acre research campus with a maximum gross floor area of approximately 1.38 million square feet. The new zoning district would conditionally permit uses such as research and development facilities, including laboratories, offices, auditoriums, conference facilities, employee amenities including cafes and health/fitness centers, accessory facilities, and public utilities. The project also includes requests to rezone the Project Site from C-1 (X) (Administrative and Professional District, Restrictive, Conditional Development) and P (Parking) to the new zoning district, an amended and restated conditional development permit, reconfiguration of the existing five lots, abandonment of reserved right-of-way for an undeveloped portion of the Burgess Drive right-of-way located on the subject property, a development agreement, environmental review including preparation of an environmental impact report, and preparation of a fiscal impact analysis. As part of the project, approximately 96 heritage trees are proposed for removal in phases.

Staff Comment: Planner Grossman reviewed the suggested process for this public hearing item. She said staff had received two pieces of correspondence since publication of the staff report. One was a comment letter from the Colorado River Board of California and the other from the California Public Utilities Commission.

Ms. Kirsten Chapman, ICF International (environmental consultants), said the environmental impact review (EIR) team consisted of the City of Menlo Park as the Lead Agency, ICF as the lead EIR consultant with assistance from WTrans for the transportation analysis, Schaff and Wheeler to prepare the water supply assessment to be included in the utilities and greenhouse gas section, and Bay Area Economics that would prepare the fiscal impact analysis to be incorporated into the public services section. She said because the project was subject to discretionary review it fell under the requirements of CEQA. She said that review determined that an environmental impact report was needed. She said the scoping session was to gather public input, identify potential impacts, early identification of possible mitigation measures, and to consider possible project alternatives. She said the project request was to redevelop the site over the next 25 years, adjust the employee cap, and modify some land use regulations governing the site. She outlined the project plan noting that project buildout

would have a maximum gross floor area of approximately 1.38 million square feet. She said over the 25 year buildout period, SRI expected to add 1,200 employees and eventually raise the employee cap to 3,000 people. The project would reconfigure the site to more efficiently circulate vehicles from surrounding public streets onto the campus. The project would reduce parking to approximately 2,444 spaces and approximately 518 of those spaces would be within the parking structure. She said that it was expected that 96 of the 125 heritage trees would be removed but replaced at a two to one ratio. She said currently SRI uses and stores hazardous materials on the site and that would continue with compliance to all regulatory standards. She listed the project approvals the City would be asked to make and reviewed the EIR development and approval process. She said comments on the scope of the EIR could be made via letter, fax or email to Planner Grossman, and oral comment would be received this evening. She said these comments would be received until 5:30 p.m. on September 3rd.

Commissioner Ferrick asked about the reconfiguration of the circulation into the site. Ms. Erin Efner, ICF, said that would be best described by the applicant under their report later on the agenda. Planner Grossman said the applicant was proposing to reconfigure the access and were proposing removal of the access at Laurel Street, which was being discussed with the City. The applicant was also four access points on Ravenswood Avenue and increased use of accesses from Middlefield Road.

Commissioner Bressler questioned the need for an EIR noting there was presumably an EIR when the project was built and when the employee cap was set at 3,200, which was not proposed to be greater. He said the square footage was not being increased. Planner Grossman said examples of case law indicate that the baseline could not be considered as your permitted conditions. She said the project site was permitted for up to 1.49 million gross square feet and 3,308 employees but that had not been actualized on the site so changes to the site required an EIR. Ms. Efner added that the existing project EIR was done in the late 70s which was dated and would not necessarily apply today.

Commissioner Riggs asked if the discretionary review that triggered CEQA was for architectural review. Planner Grossman said there were a number of discretionary entitlements being requested by the applicant. She referred to page 7 of the staff report and listed the project aspects subject to discretionary review. Commissioner Riggs asked if building height was part of the request for the zoning amendment. Planner Grossman said that was correct.

Commissioner Ferrick said as part of the traffic and transportation analysis she would like information on the percentage of employees using public transit.

Chair Kadvany asked if there were other alternative projects besides a reduced scale project that would be included in the EIR. Ms. Efner said that they had not developed alternative projects noting the identification of impacts would help inform what a good

project alternative could be. Chair Kadvany noted neighborhood concerns related to the cogeneration plant noise and whether the EIR analysis would get to neighborhood specific impacts. Ms. Efner said the area was very residential and topics they would look at would be how noise and air quality impact affect the surrounding community. She said they expected the neighbors through the EIR process to understand the project. Chair Kadvany noted the size of project, the project time period of 25 years, and its setting in a residential area and asked if the EIR addressed planning issues. Ms. Efner said there was a robust greenhouse gas analysis that would measure energy use on the site and ultimately determinations regarding energy efficiency would be made.

Commissioner Riggs asked if the EIR would cover other leased uses even potentially retail and entertainment besides SRI uses at the site. Planner Grossman said in the project description materials provided by the applicant there were no concepts of retail or theater type uses. She said they were mindful to the potential of other office uses at the site. She said the EIR was focused on SRI but the project site included research and development uses.

Commissioner Eiref asked why non-SRI employees were counted as two for one and if by moving to an employee cap of 3,000 that included non-SRI employees being counted so. Ms. Efner said the reason the non-SRI employees were counted two for one was that SRI has a strong Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program that reduces trips generated to or from the site. She said the assumption was that anyone on the campus that was not an SRI employee was not participating in the TDM Program and would generate more trips than an SRI employee. Planner Grossman said the discussion was that the employee cap would be for all employees, whether SRI or non-SRI, and each employee would count as one employee. Commissioner Eiref said the question for him was whether they were looking at 1,000 more employees over the next decade which was substantial or something less than that.

Chair Kadvany said regarding alternative uses and a 25 year period of redevelopment that it seemed the EIR would be robust enough to cover various office non-SRI uses. He asked if the EIR would cover SRI releasing a parcel that could then be developed as residential. Planner Grossman said the project proposal had no residential component and so no CEQA analysis was planned for that. She said were that to occur in the future there would need to be an environmental analysis.

Public Comment: Mr. Verle Aebi, neighbor, asked if the abandonment of the Burgess Drive right of way was being considered as part of the traffic circulation. He said a study of access from Middlefield Road should be done to determine it that would benefit traffic on the residential and Burgess Park side of the campus.

Chair Kadvany closed the public hearing.

Commission Comment: Chair Kadvany asked if the consultant could address Mr. Aebi's comment. Ms. Efner said there was not enough detail at this point to elaborate on the comment.

Development Services Manager Murphy said the key thing was the project and the applicant was requesting the abandonment of the future potential connection. He said the current 1994 General Plan eliminated that connection but the offer of dedication was still on the parcel map. He said to construct any vehicular connection between Middlefield and Burgess would be a separate project that the applicant would not support, and would need to be a City-initiated project. He said they were trying to identify a process by which the topic could be discussed over the next few months and that was outlined in the staff report including meetings with the Transportation and Bicycle Commissions and to have the Council look at the topic as it would be crucial to analysis moving forward and would have major implications to the project itself.

As a scoping item, the Commission did not take action on the item. A summary of the Commissioners' comments included:

- Alternatives
 - Confirmed plausible project alternatives
 - Consider including residential uses on-site in one of the alternatives
- Transportation
 - Confirmed what circulation changes were proposed as part of the project
 - Request for information regarding the percentage of employees who utilize alternative transportation
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
 - Consider the quantity and location of proposed hazardous materials
- Noise
 - Consider potential for noise impacts to proximate residential units
- Greenhouse Gases
 - Changes in energy usage should be evaluated

E. STUDY SESSION

- E1.** Review and comment on the following project, which will include the preparation of a Fiscal Impact Analysis (FIA):

General Plan Amendment, Zoning Ordinance Amendment, Rezoning, Lot Reconfiguration, Abandonment of Reserved Right-of-Way, Amended and Restated Conditional Development Permit, Development Agreement, Heritage Tree Removal Permits, Environmental Review/SRI International/333 Ravenswood Avenue: General Plan Amendment and Zoning Ordinance Amendment to create a new General Plan land use designation and a new zoning district that would allow for the redevelopment of the existing 63.2-acre research

campus with a maximum gross floor area of approximately 1.38 million square feet. The new zoning district would conditionally permit uses such as research and development facilities, including laboratories, offices, auditoriums, conference facilities, employee amenities including cafes and health/fitness centers, accessory facilities, and public utilities. The project also includes requests to rezone the Project Site from C-1 (X) (Administrative and Professional District, Restrictive, Conditional Development) and P (Parking) to the new zoning district, an amended and restated conditional development permit, reconfiguration of the existing five lots, abandonment of reserved right-of-way for an undeveloped portion of the Burgess Drive right-of-way located on the subject property, a development agreement, environmental review including preparation of an environmental impact report, and preparation of a fiscal impact analysis. As part of the project, approximately 96 heritage trees are proposed for removal in phases.

Staff Comment: Planner Grossman reviewed the mixed uses in the area surrounding the project site and the existing site plan noting that some of the buildings had been built in the 1940s. She reviewed the property entitlements the applicant was seeking including General Plan Amendment, Zoning Ordinance Amendment, rezoning, reconfiguration of the site, abandonment of the reserved right-of-way, an amended and restated conditional development permit (CDP), development agreement and heritage tree removals. She provided additional information on the reserved Burgess Drive right-of-way pictorially.

Planner Grossman said the process for the project was determined by the City Council at their June 11, 2013 meeting. She said the Council would be asked at their August 27, 2013 to make some changes to the schedule for the project to allow for more feedback from the public, Commission, and Council on the proposed abandonment of the reserved right-of-way. She noted the right-of-way bifurcates the campus and if maintained would create security and operational challenges for the applicant. She said the report to the Council on August 27 would have more complete timelines for the project. She noted that the draft EIR and Fiscal Impact Analyses were expected to be released mid-2014. She said there would be a number of public outreach meetings on the project and focus meetings with the Transportation Commission and Environmental Quality Commission.

Planner Grossman said the staff report identified some key topic areas for the Commission's consideration including:

- Project design with a focus on site layout, access, height, and massing;
- Interface with the neighboring properties and uses;
- Parking quantities and location;
- Maximization of TDM Program (currently 41% employees using other transit than single occupant vehicles);
- Construction phasing;
- Abandonment of reserved Burgess Drive ROW; and

- Parking agreements with neighboring property owners.

Mr. Tom Furst, Vice President and Chief Financial Officer at SRI, noted that the presentation had been given to the Council and several neighborhood meetings, and the materials associated with those presentations covered much information, so he would narrow down to some questions that had been raised and information that had not been covered as much. He said one question was why the project period program was 25 years. He said this related to their history and their future. He said their strategy included their decision that they wanted to keep Menlo Park as their home. He said they were getting ready to make substantial investments in the campus and wanted confidence that they, the City and community were aligned on the project. He said SRI was a 501.3(c), a California chartered not for profit corporation, with a core charter purpose of creating a public benefit through the application of science and technology. He said Stanford University established them in 1946 and they gained independence in 1970. He said their research was very broad noting their need for flexibility as to what structures they would need moving into the future. He said they license their technology and create spin-offs moving the benefit to the public.

Mr. Furst said the modernization was to address buildings that were built between the 1940s and 1980s. He said to attract the best researchers they needed excellent modern facilities. He said this was essentially a remodel and staff would continue to occupy the site as construction was happening, and the phasing was a large reason why the program needed 25 years. He noted the importance of seismic safety and energy efficiency. He said in terms of minimizing traffic congestion that the proposed plan has a ring road so where you are going on campus can be disconnected to some degree better than now to where you enter the campus.

Mr. Furst said they have a number of golf carts on campus because of the distance between one corner of the campus and another. He said they have a 25-year Master Plan they need to implement in a thoughtful way. He said they need to be able to slowly increase their staff as they succeeded and their organization was able to do more to fulfill its mission. He said they were not about growth but needed the ability to expand staff at times. He said they thought they could improve the visible parts of the campus for the community. He said they intended to replace the 90 heritage trees proposed for removal with 1,000 trees. He said their shipping and receiving dock currently looked toward the Classic Homes community and they would move that where it would interface with commercial properties. He said they have 3,200 parking spaces and proposed having 2,400 spaces and increasing green space. He reviewed their TDM Program, noted they have an Alternative Transportation Coordinator and that they are adding charging stations for electrical vehicles.

Commissioner Eiref asked about the context for SRI as organization and if there were other comparable organizations. He asked also about the 25 years. Mr. Furst said there were a few more large not for profit institutes in the country but noted they were all a little different and similar. He said they could not go faster on the project as they

would be in situ as they were replacing buildings. He said buildings would be coming down and going up at the same time. He noted each building would take 15 to 18 months to build. When completed, the people needed to be moved out from where they were and into the new building to get settled before they took down another building to rebuild. He said they had looked for another site in the area where the whole organization could move but realized it would impact their staff continuity. He said what they have is very unique and not assumable by other operations nor were there such places available for SRI's operations. He said economically they could digest this project in a measured way. He said SRI was an integration of different disciplines and in splitting disciplines their concern was with the discovery that would never be made because there was no connection and opportunity for the collaborative interaction. He said they compete and partner with everyone. He said the biggest asset they try to have was to make themselves unique and have the unique solutions. Commissioner Eiref said the site was not really identifiable from the roads surrounding it and questioned centering the buildings on the property. He suggested in the new design that they have a portion of building that would be open to the public to share about their work, and noted the Computer History Museum. Mr. Furst said someday they would like to have something similar.

Chair Kadvany asked with the 25-year planning horizon how the infrastructure would be accommodated and changed. He asked if there would be changes underground. Mr. Furst said over the last five years every time they considered doing something with the electrical or chiller system they considered what they would need for this plan. He said before they put up the first building they would look at infrastructure and how best to factor its installation in within simultaneously having buildings built and existing ones occupied.

Chair Kadvany asked what the prime factor was in their desire to have the Burgess Drive right-of-way abandoned. Mr. Furst said SRI falls under many regulatory constraints and they were very sensitive to access to all of their research facilities, and some more important ones exist on the area of the right-of-way. He said they did not think they could continue to satisfy all of the security requirements if they put a break in the security perimeter. He said alternatively they wanted to be sensitive and creative to the needs and whatever they could do in the perimeter of their campus to help the community.

Commissioner Bressler asked about fractions of work done for governments or corporate interests. Mr. Furst said that 85 to 90% of their work was done for some branch of the U.S. government. He said within that the work was extremely diverse. Commissioner Bressler asked what fraction of their government work needed some level of security clearance. Mr. Furst said from 15 to 20%. He said there was sensitivity to SRI's work for several reasons notably the government work but also commercial clients extremely sensitive to work being done on their behalf. He said they also have sensitivities around their own intellectual property that they are developing.

Chair Kadvany asked about the number of employees over the years. Mr. Furst said in the 1980s to 1990s it was roughly 3,000 and over a 20 year period declined to the lowest point in 2000 which was to 1,200 people. He said it was growing since then. He said it was a slow growth trend. He said the two constraints on their employee size were the engagements and contracts they sell and the other to have a world class staff to do those. He said essentially they have to keep selling in addition to staffing with great people.

Chair Kadvany said that the energy analysis would be a key component of the EIR and that the staff report seemed to indicate they use over 23,000,000 million kWh of electricity per year. He said if that would be the same usage as a typical university. Mr. Furst said he could not make that comparison but he thought their organization would not be different in energy consumption from other organizations that do similar work. He said for all utility resources they would be looking at greater efficiencies as they moved forward.

Mr. Verle Aebi, Menlo Park, asked related to relocating buildings if any consideration had been made to the use of toxic materials and moving that use away from residential areas. He said the safety and security element should be considered. He asked about toxic materials and occupancy.

Chair Kadvany called Ms. Nancy McCray but she was no longer present.

Chair Kadvany closed the public hearing.

Commission Comment: Commissioner Onken said that the community was very supportive of SRI and he was impressed with the very managed, staged, and long term view of the site they were taking. He said the Commission as a body had interest in this project in terms of land use and architecture, and how the site would be used as it related to the community. He said their internal operations, employee retention and security were important to the community as well. He said there seemed to be an attitude however that as long as the site was shrouded by trees and no one from SRI parked on residential streets, then no one cared about the project. He said the City had gone through a long process to create a detailed plan for the downtown and El Camino Real. He said SRI's proposal was kind of unusual within a community. He said the question was whether these sites were benefit for the community or black holes in the peninsula. He said the question was whether the land could be used to knit the community together. He said this was their opportunity to make the buildings and site views more connected to the rest of the community. He said he wanted more architectural participation of this site in the community as opposed to being locked away.

Commissioner Riggs said he uses the streets surrounding the project site regularly and was often aware of the campus, particularly from a city planning point of view, in the odd relationship between Ringwood and Ravenswood and the campus. He said although

the Ringwood and Middlefield intersection provided a well-lighted entrance to the campus it created quite a barrier to east-west connectivity using Highway 101 as a reference point. He said he would like that intersection improved and as Menlo Park has no direct connection east to west that he would like that improved which would be more valuable to the City than the Burgess Drive connection. He said regarding the centralized soft edged height he would like to see how the parking around that could be a benefit or positive aspect of the campus as seen from the rest of town. He noted he might like to see one-story shops or something similar around the perimeter of the SRI campus. However, he doesn't expect it to be altered to have a different character, but is looking forward to the development of a plan. He suggested regarding the tall buildings that since their tops were visible from time to time that it would be desirable to have something better than a roof screen.

Commissioner Bressler said he did not think it was reasonable to ask the applicant to redesign. He said there was a lot of room around the periphery and perhaps there could be some retail or public green space there.

Chair Kadvany said with the 25 year roll out that there was uncertainty about the number of employees, how much parking would be needed and how transit might change. He said some of that land could be considered dynamic and not exclusively tied to automobiles.

Commissioner Eiref asked if they had visiting scientists/researchers who needed to stay for a period of time, and if they had considered having short-term housing on the campus for the visiting researchers. Mr. Furst said they have a lot of visitors both scientists and clients. He said they have been adding staff from out of town and some staff already lives in Menlo Park. He said the staff who needed to move here were a relatively small number. He said getting them to afford the cost of living in this area was the biggest and longest term challenge. He said they had not thought of putting housing on campus as the bottleneck in hiring had not been a question of them finding housing but affording it. Commissioner Eiref said housing would be an interesting concept to consider.

Chair Kadvany asked about the development agreement. Development Services Manager Murphy said the same process that was used for development agreements for recent projects, Menlo Gateway and Facebook, was being used for this project. He said there would be no negotiations until after the draft EIR was produced. He said offering ideas was fine but there would not be any negotiations yet.

As a study session item, the Commission did not take action on the item.

Commissioners provided comments including the following:

- Housing
 - Consider the inclusion of on-site employee housing for visiting researchers
- Project Design
 - Consider opening up the campus to the community more through the provision of public open space, retail uses, or other publicly accessible uses on the perimeter of the project site
 - Consider the appearance of the tops of the buildings in addition to the required screening of roof-top equipment
- Development Time Horizon
 - Consider infrastructure phasing required by the 25-year build-out timeline
 - Minimize development timeframe, if feasible
- Transportation
 - Instead of constructing public access on the reserved Burgess Drive right-of-way, consider a connection proximate to Ringwood Avenue
- Employee Count
 - Confirmed that all employees would be counted as one employee, regardless of whether or not they are SRI employees (current CDP counts non-SRI employees on a 2:1 basis)

F. PUBLIC HEARING

There were no public hearings.

G. REGULAR BUSINESS

There was no regular business.

H. COMMISSION BUSINESS

H1. Residential Design Review: The Planning Commission will review a report from the Design Review subcommittee that was appointed at the June 10, 2013 meeting. Areas of focus include: design review examples, thinking about Menlo Park neighborhoods, Planning Commission issues and experience, and next steps.

Chair Kadvany noted the Design Review subcommittee consisted of Commissioners Kadvany, Onken, and Riggs. He introduced the work the subcommittee had done and provided a visual presentation. He noted they had included in the packet the City of Palo Alto's Design Guidelines. He said the City of Burlingame has Design Guidelines

and a link to that document was provided. He noted design guidelines that had been drafted for Menlo Park in 2000 and 2002 that were never implemented.

Commissioner Onken said the starting point for design guidelines the City of Palo Alto developed was determining what type of neighborhood you were in and how the neighborhood might influence a design. He said the first thing the Commission looked at was the context of the neighborhood and from that what guidelines would be applied. He used the example of a “strongly uniform” neighborhood which would have a dominant style that would require a very prescriptive set of architectural guidelines. He said he did not think that approach would work anywhere in Menlo Park. He said however there was a “homogeneous” type of neighborhood where the buildings were pretty much the same and where there were consistent architectural elements and a clear character in which other designs would be out of place or not neighborly. He said there might be guidelines for such communities that would look at how to preserve character. He said another kind was a “transitional” neighborhood which might at one time have been homogeneous but was changing. He said people wanted the Commission to not let things go wild in such neighborhoods. He said there then were “mix” neighborhoods in which it was difficult to name what guidelines if any they might apply.

Chair Kadvany said they discussed if there were design guidelines that applied whatever the neighborhood type and they identified topics that included quality of materials, nature of windows, separated true divided lights, design quality, trees and landscaping, energy and environment, the role and relationship of the automobile to residence and street, whether the building being built in was in a special place such as a corner lot or near heritage trees, FAR buildout, consistency and impartiality between staff and commission decision, expectations when revisions were requested, and the dynamics of developers, designers, builders, and property owners. He said before they went forward they would like input from the rest of the Commission and staff.

Commissioner Bressler said they should also look at this in terms of non-standard and standard size lots, and if they were doing design guidelines those should apply to all lots.

Commissioner Riggs said he was sensitive to what Commissioner Bressler said as his own neighborhood had organized over its concern that all of their lots would be subject to Commission review for any redevelopment projects. He said the guidelines should inform those whose projects have to come to the Commission. He said this would formalize what the staff has been sharing informally with applicants. He said he agreed however that it should apply to all applications and there should be a shortened list that applied to all lots. He said he would like the effort to create guidelines to move forward as he did not think it was unnecessarily unfair that they might only apply to substandard lots.

Commissioner Ferrick said she had mixed feelings and concerns with the title “Residential Guidelines” and suggested instead “Residential Redevelopment Principles.” She said something like that might be less threatening and that it should be focused on all of the City residential lots. She said she had concerns with terms such as “quality materials” and “quality architecture.” She said Suburban Park had been a homogenous neighborhood and now was transitional, and if it became mixed, it had to be neighborly. She said she did not want this to be unfair and onerous to property owners.

Chair Kadvany noted in Palo Alto that they do individual review or IR of residential projects.

Commissioner Eiref said from personal experience he thought more information about how things worked in the City was desirable. He said he liked the use of the word “guidelines.” He said he liked the City of Palo Alto’s visuals. He said a careful balance would have to be created around “guidelines” as opposed to regulations. He said he was open to trying this in one place. He said he thought that those with substandard lots would appreciate guidelines.

Commissioner Ferrick said this could be a helpful resource. She noted that they had seen designs that would not fit within these guidelines that worked. She said there had to be some flexibility too.

Commissioner Onken said he thought neighborliness was the point of the Planning Commission. He asked staff if they would like such a set of guidelines or if it would be a burden.

Development Services Manager Murphy said this was a healthy discussion for the Commission to have. He said generally if they could get better clarity for everyone involved that would help staff. He said if the Commission wanted to have the subcommittee keep working on this he thought they were on the right track.

Chair Kadvany said he liked the City of Palo Alto guidelines because of the visuals and how much they had gotten on a small amount of paper noting Burlingame’s guidelines were too long to digest. He said it was almost like design frameworks noting that there could be compromises. He said it should be made clear that this material was to inform judgment. He said they needed to create an ethic of neighborhood trust.

Commissioner Eiref said he recalled an observation made by a former Commissioner about the design process that what the Commission added to the process helped to bond the community together. He said he knew things could go wrong in design and planning that could create bad feelings that lasted many years in neighborhoods.

Commissioner Riggs said Commissioner Onken had asked if these guidelines were to be considered as something that could be sold to Council or were something the

Commission does. He said they really needed to go ahead with the guidelines and that they needed both outcomes. He suggested that they first address the guidelines at the level the Commission sees projects. He said when it came time and Council was interested in having guidelines they would then have a study session to get to what the middle ground was.

Discussion ensued about at what level and breadth guidelines would be applied or handed out to applicants.

Development Services Manager Murphy said staff would not hand out guidelines to any applicants unless authorized by the Council to do so. He said the General Plan update would inform these discussions as well.

It was the Commission consensus that the subcommittee will continue to work on the development of design guidelines for use by staff when working with applicants and the Commission in the review of development proposals for single-family homes on substandard lots. After development of guidelines and a period of use, the Commission may consider expanding the use of the guidelines on a broader scale.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Staff Liaison: Justin Murphy, Development Services Manager

Recording Secretary: Brenda Bennett

Approved by the Planning Commission on September 23, 2013