

**GRAND JUNCTION PLANNING COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 23, 2003 MINUTES
7:00 P.M. to 8:55 P.M.**

The regularly scheduled Planning Commission hearing was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by Chairman Paul Dibble. The public hearing was held in the City Hall Auditorium.

In attendance, representing the City Planning Commission, were Dr. Paul Dibble (Chairman), John Redifer, Richard Blosser, John Evans and Roland Cole. William Putnam and Bill Pitts were absent.

In attendance, representing the City's Community Development Department, were Bob Blanchard (Community Development Director), Pat Cecil (Development Services Supervisor), and Lisa Cox (Senior Planner).

Also present were John Shaver (Assistant City Attorney) and Rick Dorris (Development Engineer).

Terri Troutner was present to record the minutes.

There were approximately 13 interested citizens present during the course of the hearing.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Available for consideration were the minutes from the August 26, 2003 public hearing.

MOTION: (Commissioner Redifer) "Mr. Chairman, I move for approval of the minutes of August 26."

Commissioner Evans seconded the motion. A vote was called and the motion passed unanimously by a vote of 5-0.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS, PRESENTATIONS AND/OR VISITORS

There were no announcements, presentations and/or visitors.

III. CONSENT AGENDA

Offered for placement on the Consent Agenda were items ANX-2003-169 (Zone of Annexation--Holton Annexation) and VE-2003-150 (Vacation of Easement--Grand Mesa Center Easement Vacation). No objection was raised from the audience, planning commissioners or staff on either of these items.

MOTION: (Commissioner Cole) "Mr. Chairman, I move for approval of the Consent Agenda."

Commissioner Blosser seconded the motion. A vote was called and the motion passed unanimously by a vote of 5-0.

IV. FULL HEARING

FP-2003-100 FINAL PLAN--ST. MARY'S PARKING GARAGE

A request for Final Plan approval for a parking garage for 408 parking spaces in a PD (Planned Development) zone district.

Petitioner: St. Mary's Hospital--Keith Estridge

Location: 2635 North 7th Street

PETITIONER'S PRESENTATION

Rob Jenkins, representing the petitioner, offered a Powerpoint presentation containing the following slides: 1) Master Site Plan, 2) Final Plat map, and 3) an east elevation drawing of the parking garage. Mr. Jenkins overviewed the request and noted the proposed location of the new parking garage, featuring an attached covered pedestrian bridge which would cross Wellington Avenue. From the original concept design, architects had been able to rework the parking garage area layout without changing its footprint to provide for another 19 parking spaces, bringing the total number of spaces requested to 427. The garage would be constructed with four above-ground levels, with another level partially underground. The pedestrian bridge would better accommodate grade differentials and provide a more level and safe means for staff to cross Wellington Avenue from staff parking lots. Eventually, the bridge would extend to a new hospital addition, and staff would be able to walk across the bridge from the garage directly into the hospital. Building materials for the garage included brick, concrete and glass and would match as closely as possible with materials used in the hospital's 1994 addition. Primary access into the garage structure would be via Wellington Avenue at the current Wellington Avenue/7th Street intersection. Wellington Avenue, 7th Street, and Center Street frontages would be landscaped, with irrigation provided to all landscaped areas.

QUESTIONS

Commissioner Cole asked how the general public would get to the parking garage after dropping off emergency services patients. Mr. Jenkins noted the ambulatory and outpatient entrances and said that people could circulate through the adjacent open parking lot, travel down the hill, and enter the parking garage that way, or they could always park near entrances in available open parking lots. Mr. Jenkins provided a brief explanation of the proposed "ring road" around the hospital, and how, when completed, it would greatly improve internal circulation.

Chairman Dibble asked if a southern entrance to the parking garage would be provided, to which Mr. Jenkins replied negatively. Existing grades did not make that a viable option. When asked how doctors and others coming from medical offices south of Center Avenue would get to the main hospital building, Mr. Jenkins answered that they could either take the stairs located to the southwest of the site and climb the hill or walk along 7th Street to the parking garage entrance and take the elevator located inside the garage. Pedestrian traffic traveling through the garage was discouraged because of safety concerns.

Commissioner Evans asked if onsite security would be provided to the garage, to which Mr. Jenkins replied affirmatively. St. Mary's provided security currently throughout its building and covering its grounds; that would extend that to the garage as well.

Chairman Dibble asked if hospital staff would be using the parking garage. Mr. Jenkins replied negatively, saying that staff would continue to use the parking lots across 7th Street; however, expansion of those parking areas was planned to more than accommodate staff needs.

STAFF'S PRESENTATION

Lisa Cox offered a Powerpoint presentation containing the following slides: 1) background of original submittal for a 408-space parking garage, 2) site location map, 3) aerial photo map, 4) Future Land Use Map, 5) Existing City and County Zoning map, and 6) findings of fact and conclusions. Initially, staff had required only one condition of approval, that the utilities just south of the garage building on the north side of Wellington be redesigned to move the sanitary sewer line at least 10 feet off of the building. However, this was the first staff had heard about the increased number of proposed parking spaces. Staff asked that any motion for approval also include a condition requiring the petitioner to submit a revised plan to staff for review and final approval. Staff recommended approval with those two conditions.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

FOR:

There were no comments for the request.

AGAINST:

Dr. Ivan Alkes (2345 North 7th Street, Grand Junction), representing himself and Warren Peterson, said that while not opposed to the proposal, the garage would pose a hardship to the physicians and others who traveled daily from the Center Street medical offices to St. Mary's Hospital. He wondered if the entrance currently proposed along the south side of the garage could be moved to the southwest corner to facilitate pedestrian traffic. And if that wasn't possible, could a pedestrian walkway along the southwest side of the garage from Center Avenue to the hospital be provided?

PETITIONER'S REBUTTAL

Dan Prinster, also representing the petitioner, said that he had spoken with Dr. Alkes previously about providing a pedestrian access through the garage. Because of grade and safety concerns, that just wasn't possible. He realized that having to walk around the garage along 7th Street would be an inconvenience, but there didn't seem to be any other option available.

Dr. Alkes said that some physicians and staff needed to access the hospital throughout the day, sometimes to address emergency services. Hospital staff also traveled daily to the various medical offices across Center Street; the inconvenience would impact them as well.

Mr. Jenkins said that the entrance proposed for the south side of the garage wasn't to facilitate pedestrian traffic but to meet building code requirements. Extending the stairway currently existing from Center Street to meet the hospital's grade and providing a walkway along the western side of the parking garage to the admitting entrance was a viable option and could be provided.

QUESTIONS

When Chairman Dibble asked if that provision could be handled administratively, Mr. Shaver replied affirmatively but asked that it be included in the motion as a condition of approval.

With so many new aspects of the plan having been discussed, Commissioner Redifer asked if the item should be tabled to give staff a chance for another review. Mr. Jenkins reiterated that the increase in the number of parking spaces would not change the existing building envelope. Ms. Cox said that changes discussed this evening could be handled administratively if the Planning Commission conditioned its approval to allow staff the latitude for minor adjustment to the petitioner's proposed plan, if deemed necessary. Changes proposed by the petitioner would probably be minor, but staff would appreciate the opportunity of another review before final approval was granted. Mr. Jenkins assented to giving staff final review and approval authority if so directed by the Planning Commission. He added that as a result of the internal space reconfiguration of the garage, some relocation of utilities would also be necessary.

Mr. Shaver asked that the motion limit the number of approved garage parking spaces to a maximum of 427.

DISCUSSION

Commissioner Evans agreed that pedestrian traffic through the garage should be discouraged, but wondered if the southern entrance would be used as such. He thought that providing a pedestrian walkway along the western side of the garage from Center Street was a good idea.

Commissioner Blosser agreed. He didn't think that the parking garage would greatly hinder pedestrian access from Center Street to the hospital but the petitioner's willingness to provide a pedestrian walkway along the western side of the garage represented a good compromise. He took no issue with the proposed changes as long as they received staff review and approval. He commended St. Mary's representatives for doing such a good job on mitigating the many challenges arising from implementation of its Master Plan.

MOTION: (Commissioner Blosser) "Mr. Chairman, on item FP-2003-100, request for approval of a Final Plan for a proposed parking garage, I move that we approve with the findings and conclusions as outlined by staff above and subject to staff review and approval of the additional parking from 408 to 427 spaces maximum, as well as the utility relocation concerns [and] including the west side access along the building."

Chairman Dibble felt that the reference to the utility relocation should probably be excluded from the motion. Staff and legal counsel explained that the utility relocation was part of the proposal; thus, its mention in the motion was both appropriate and necessary. Mr. Dorris said that the utility relocation was a minor issue, one easily addressed. No changes to the motion were made.

Commissioner Blosser seconded the motion. A vote was called and the motion passed unanimously by a vote of 5-0.

Commissioner Cole congratulated St. Mary's representatives on the fine work it had done on its new addition, one that he'd recently visited.

ANX-2002-230 PRELIMINARY PLAT AND VACATION OF EASEMENT--RED TAIL RIDGE
A request for approval to develop the 9.88 acres into 36 single-family lots and vacate a water line easement.

Petitioner: La Cima I, Inc., Jay Kee Jacobson

Location: Highway 50 at the south end of Buena Vista Drive

The petitioner's representative asked that staff make their presentation first.

STAFF'S PRESENTATION

Pat Cecil offered a Powerpoint presentation which included the following slides: 1) site location map, 2) aerial photo map, 3) Future Land Use Map, and 4) Preliminary Plan. The property represented the only one in the area under City jurisdiction; however, both the site and much of the surrounding area was zoned RSF-4. The proposed project density was 3.6 units/acre. Twelve of the proposed lots would be accessed via shared drives, with the other 24 lots taking access directly from the streets they fronted. No off-street parking would be allowed in any of the shared driveways. The easement vacation was more a housekeeping measure since no utilities existed within the easement. Primary access into the site would be derived from Buena Vista Drive to connect to the Highway 50 frontage road. A second access will be via A 1/4 Road located in the southeast corner of the site and connecting with Dry Creek Road. A temporary turnaround will be established on the Orchard Mesa Irrigation District property to the west (location noted), with a street stub provided to that property. Due to the length of Great Plains Drive, a TEDS exception had been necessary and was granted on July 31, 2003. The petitioner will be required to reconstruct access driveways to properties adjacent to Buena Vista that will be disrupted/destroyed during construction of the new road.

A letter had been received from Linda Sparks (141 Buena Vista Drive, Grand Junction) who had expressed concerns about increased traffic along Buena Vista Drive and the project's density. She had asked that the petitioner be required to provide a soundproofing privacy fence along the project's northern property line (her southern property line).

Staff determined that both the Preliminary Plat and vacation request met Growth Plan requirements and Code criteria and approval for both was recommended.

QUESTIONS

Chairman Dibble noted that if no off-street parking was allowed in the shared driveways, how would extra vehicles be accommodated? Mr. Cecil said that the petitioner bore the responsibility of addressing that issue. Making sure that adequate off-street parking was provided would be a condition of the building permit.

Commissioner Blosser asked if a turn lane would be provided off the Highway 50 frontage road to Buena Vista Drive, to which Mr. Cecil replied negatively. When asked if left turns would be permitted onto Highway 50 from Buena Vista Drive, Mr. Cecil answered affirmatively.

PETITIONER'S PRESENTATION

Ted Ciavonne, representing the petitioner, said that the Highway 50/Buena Vista Drive entrance had been reviewed by CDOT staff, who had no concerns over traffic impacts. He noted that the existing portion of Buena Vista Drive did not currently align with the segment proposed. For that reason, some of the existing driveways along Buena Vista Drive may require reconstruction, for which the petitioner would be responsible. Chicanes would be placed at the northern entrance into the property to provide traffic calming, and half-street improvements were planned for A 1/4 Road located along the site's southern property line. Mr. Ciavonne expressed agreement with staff's presentation and recommendation and urged Planning Commission approval.

QUESTIONS

Commissioner Cole asked for clarification of the proposed project density. Mr. Ciavonne said that it would build out to a density of 3.64 units/acre.

Mr. Dorris referenced the two large parcels directly west of the subject site and said that they belonged to the Orchard Mesa Irrigation District. He understood that they were owned by the District and would soon be auctioned off.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

FOR:

There were no comments for the request.

AGAINST:

Linda Sparks (141 Buena Vista Drive, Grand Junction) said that while not really opposed to the request, she wanted to reiterate the concerns outlined in her letter. She was concerned over Buena Vista Drive being the primary entrance for the currently proposed project and possibly the primary entrance for the two western properties previously mentioned. The two western parcels, she said, were due to be auctioned off this coming weekend; thus, the possibility for development sooner versus later was present. If all three parcels derived their primary access from Buena Vista Drive, that represented a huge increase in traffic. She thought that a soundproofing privacy fence should be extended along the site's entire northern property line to buffer neighbors to the north. She noted the existence of a mature tree at the site's northern entrance near her driveway and hoped that the petitioner would make every attempt to save it.

Shawna Wells (143 Buena Vista Drive, Grand Junction) noted the location of her property at the corner of Buena Vista Drive and the Highway 50 frontage road. She was glad that the petitioner had provided another exit but thought that the bulk of traffic would use Buena Vista Drive. She concurred with the concerns expressed by Ms. Sparks, adding that safety would be compromised as a result of so much traffic being directed to Buena Vista Drive. She wanted assurance that access into her property would be preserved and that the petitioner retain as much existing vegetation and as many trees as possible. She also hoped that the petitioner would continue to dialog with her and other neighbors.

Jim Henderson (141 Buena Vista Drive, Grand Junction) also concurred with comments made by Ms. Sparks, adding his concerns over potential negative impacts to the current peace and quiet of the neighborhood. He thought that the project's higher density had the potential of perpetuating the perception that Orchard Mesa was an undesirable area in which to live. The section in staff's analysis regarding the requirement that there be "little or no adverse impact" to the surrounding neighborhood, he felt, had not been met. A reduction in the project's density would help reduce expected impacts from noise pollution and crowding. Mr. Henderson asked that additional traffic calming measures be implemented along Buena Vista Drive to slow traffic.

PETITIONER'S REBUTTAL

Mr. Ciavonne said that since he had no control over the Orchard Mesa Irrigation District's land, he could not comment on potential impacts arising from future development of the two referenced western parcels. With regard to Ms. Sparks fencing request, although fencing was not required as a condition of the project's approval, he would include in the subdivision's covenants a requirement that all fencing erected by homeowners be of a consistent type and using consistent materials. He expected this to translate into standard 6-foot-high cedar privacy fencing. He hoped that the existing tree referenced by Ms. Sparks could be saved, but noted that the alignment of the road was fixed. He reiterated his intention to install chicanes at the northern entrance into the site, which would help slow traffic. That location, he continued, represented a halfway point in Buena Vista Road. Additional stop signs could be installed if required by the City.

The project's density was consistent with the surrounding area, the Growth Plan recommendations, and Code requirements. Mr. Ciavonne said that he had also consulted the Orchard Mesa Plan, which stated that properties south of Highway 50 should remain or be developed to a density averaging approximately 3.5 units/acre. The Plan also encouraged development to situate on non-agricultural land. So the project's density was consistent with the Orchard Mesa Plan as well. The project would improve the land as well as provide for the future interconnectivity of other adjacent parcels.

DISCUSSION

Commissioner Blosser asked staff if there was any possibility of those two western parcels deriving their primary access via Lyle Drive. Mr. Dorris said that Lyle Drive was currently poorly developed and almost unrecognizable as a street. If that were an option, likely the developer(s) of those properties would be required to make substantial improvements to Lyle Drive. That could include the purchase of additional right-of-way. Both properties would still be required to provide secondary accesses. Mr. Cecil said that all of this was speculation. It really just depended on how those two properties developed and when.

Commissioner Cole reminded other planning commissioners that they should only consider the request currently before them and not speculate on future development. Commissioner Blosser remarked that while true, potential problems could be avoided by at least considering what "could" happen.

Commissioner Blosser expressed some concern over traffic flows from Highway 50 onto Buena Vista Drive, and he too hoped that the referenced tree could be saved. He encouraged the petitioner's representatives to make every attempt to address those concerns. Since the project met required criteria, he could see no reason not to approve it.

Commissioner Evans agreed that with regard to the privacy fence, likely it would turn out to be a standard 6-foot-high cedar picket fence. He commented that growth was inevitable even though in many instances surrounding neighbors were unhappy about it. He agreed that it met City requirements and expressed support.

Commissioner Cole felt that the Growth Plan had proven itself to be a good working document, one which incorporated a lot of careful thought from staff and the public. The project's density fell within the 2-4 units/acre recommendations of the Growth Plan. While he understood neighbor concerns for privacy, he was sure that the fencing issue could be easily mitigated between new and existing property owners. The covenants, he continued, would provide added protection.

Commissioner Redifer remarked that this area was in the awkward position of transitioning from rural to urban. He urged the petitioner's representative to consider and mitigate neighbor concerns where possible. The plan, he said, was a good one and it met all of the requirements. He too expressed support.

Chairman Dibble agreed that this was an area in transition. Traffic and privacy issues were always paramount to existing neighbors when infill developments were proposed. He expressed a preference for an additional

traffic calming device installed further up Buena Vista Drive, closer to Highway 50, and urged the petitioner's representative to consider doing so. He agreed that the proposal met the City's criteria and expressed his support.

MOTION: (Commissioner Blosser) "Mr. Chairman, I move that the Planning Commission recommend approval of the easement vacation, ANX-2002-230, to the City Council with the finding and conclusions listed in the staff report, and that the Planning Commission approve the Preliminary Plat for Redtail Ridge Subdivision, ANX-2002-230, with the findings and conclusions listed in the staff report."

Commissioner Cole seconded the motion. A vote was called and the motion passed unanimously by a vote of 5-0.

With no further business to discuss, the public hearing was adjourned at 8:55 P.M.