

FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES OF APRIL 9, 2009

7. GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT/REZONE

A08-0016/Z08-0040/El Dorado Mirage Plaza submitted by EL MIRAGE GROUP (Agent: Carlton Engineering, Inc.) for General Plan amendment changing land use designation from Medium Density Residential (MDR) to Commercial (C); and rezone from Single-Family Three-Acre Residential District (R3A) to Commercial-Planned Development (C-PD). The property, identified by Assessor's Parcel Number 327-150-03, consisting of 10 acres, is located on the south side of Runnymede Drive, approximately 0.1 miles east of the intersection with El Dorado Road, in the Placerville area, Supervisorial District III. (Negative declaration prepared)

Jason Hade presented the item to the Commission with a recommendation of approval to the Board of Supervisors. He stated that there is no development proposed, but that the applicant concurred with staff's recommendation to have a Planned Development (PD) overlay. The two key issues that staff reviewed were: land use compatibility and infrastructure. Mr. Hade stated that no public comments were received.

The Commission inquired on the following items: (1) The PD component in regards to Commercial zoning; (2) What type of zone change – parcel or complete; (3) Clarification on improvements with El Dorado Road and Hwy 50; (4) Adequacy of CEQA document; and (5) Potential significant increase of units if zoned Commercial and the Mixed Use Development component is utilized.

Tariq Shamma, applicant's agent, indicated that a significant amount of finances have been invested into this project and that they will improve the property to whatever the market/public dictates. He stated that they were encouraged by staff to utilize the Mixed Use Development component for residential housing in the upper level of the property and commercial/retail in the lower portion. Mr. Shamma said that they were planning on tying it together with a boardwalk.

Troy Vukovich supports the project as it will provide sales tax, work for local businesses, and is perfectly designed for the area.

Dr. Richard Boylan stated that the General Plan amendment is needed because the proposal is not consistent with the General Plan. This project is disruptive and destructive of the area and residents are concerned about the increase in high density. Dr. Boylan also voiced concerns with the prepared CEQA document. He stated that Indian Creek, which is a feeder to Webb Creek, runs through the subject parcel and felt that this project would cause a significant impact. Dr. Boylan requested that an Environmental Impact Report be prepared to protect the watershed and address the significant traffic impacts. He felt that this project needs design modifications.

Karen Yates, adjacent owner, voiced concern over the environmental document and disagreed with the document's statement that there were no significant impacts. She identified impacts on trees, creek and traffic. Ms. Yates stated that a corner of the subject parcel goes right next to her bedroom window and was concerned about the impacts of that. She also indicated that today's meeting notice was the first time that she has heard about this project.

Ray Bracher, resident off of Sharp Lane, which is south of the proposed project, in a neighborhood of approximately 10 houses, indicated that several of them have voiced support of the proposal.

Sue Taylor said that she has a problem with the County's current planning process of allowing projects to come in with General Plan amendments and rezones. Ms. Taylor read a recent letter from Supervisor Sweeney to the rest of the Board of Supervisors regarding his feelings on General Plan amendments and buffers.

Sam Driggers, El Dorado County Economic Development Coordinator, stated that they support the project as it is consistent with the sustainable economic development with the County. He stated that they are committed to work with the applicant and the community on this project.

In response to public comments, Mr. Shamma stated the following: (1) Working with Sycamore Consulting to protect Indian Creek; (2) Roads will be improved; (3) Providing needed commercial amenities to the area; and (4) Project is compatible to the County's and community's needs.

Commissioner Heflin stated that from an economic development standpoint, the project is consistent with the General Plan. He also felt that the traffic issues have been addressed.

Chair Mathews indicated that from a real estate perspective, the parcel is a difficult spot for residential use due to the vicinity of Hwy 50. He requested that the minutes reflect his word of caution to the applicant that adequate buffers between any future development and the adjoining neighborhood would be closely reviewed to ensure it blended accordingly. Chair Mathews also liked the PD overlay as it allowed the County to advocate the types of businesses permitted.

Commissioner Tolhurst thought that a tiered project might make sense, however, was still concerned with the east side of the project. He said that even without seeing an actual proposed development, he could see how it could work and this would create property close to transportation, work and commercial businesses.

Commissioner Pratt indicated that there is a lot of changes slotted for that particular area and when commercial development begins, wants the overall area to be taken into consideration when proposing signs and lighting.

No further discussion was presented.

Motion: Commissioner Heflin moved, seconded by Commissioner Tolhurst, and unanimously carried (5-0), to recommend the Board of Supervisors take the following actions: (1) Adopt the Negative Declaration based on the Initial Study prepared by staff; and (2) Approve General Plan amendment application A08-0016 and Rezone application Z08-0040 based on the findings proposed by staff.

AYES: Rain, Pratt, Tolhurst, Heflin, Mathews

NOES: None