

**COUNTY OF EL DORADO DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**



Agenda of: June 26, 2014

Staff: Mel Pabalinas

**GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT/REZONE/SPECIFIC PLAN
REVISION/PLANNED DEVELOPMENT REVISION**

FILE NUMBERS/

PROJECT NAME: A14-0001/Z14-0001/SP86-0002-R/PD94-0004R-2/El Dorado Hills Apartments

APPLICANT/

AGENT: Alexandro Economou, Spanos Companies

PROPERTY

OWNER: Tradewinds Lodge, Inc

ENGINEER:

TSD Engineering

REQUEST:

The project consists of the following requests:

1. General Plan Amendment adding a new policy under Objective 2.2.6 (Site Specific Policy Section) increasing the maximum residential density allowed in the General Plan from 24 dwelling units/acre to a maximum of 55 dwelling units/acre for the 4.565-acre site within the Town Center East Planned Development area identified as APNs 121-290-60, -61, and -62;
2. El Dorado Hills Specific Plan Amendment incorporating multifamily residential use, density, and related standards for the project site. Subject site would be designated as "Urban Infill Residential" within the Village T area of the El Dorado Hills Specific Plan;
3. Rezone of project site from General Commercial-Planned Development (CG-PD) to Multifamily Residential-Planned Development (RM-PD) and revisions to the RM-zone district development standards applicable to the proposed 250-unit apartment complex; and

4. Revision to the approved Town Center East Development Plan incorporating multifamily residential use, density, and related design and development standards for the proposed 250-unit apartment complex within Planning Area 2 of the Town Center East Development Plan. The proposed apartment complex would be contained in a maximum 5-story, 60-foot-tall building and a 5-story, 60-foot-tall parking garage and other amenities.

LOCATION: The property is located on the northwest corner of Town Center Blvd. and Vine Street within the Town Center East Commercial Center in El Dorado Hills, Supervisorial District I (Exhibit A).

APNs: 121-290-60, -61, -62 (Exhibit B)

ACREAGE: 4.56 acres (total)

GENERAL PLAN: Adopted Plan (AP-El Dorado Hills Specific Plan-Commercial) (Exhibit C)

ZONING: General Commercial-Planned Development (CG-PD) (Exhibit D)

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT: Subsequent Mitigated Negative Declaration based on the Initial Study

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the Planning Commission forward a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to take the following actions:

1. Adopt the Subsequent Mitigated Negative Declaration based on the Initial Study;
2. Adopt the Mitigation Monitoring Reporting Program in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15074(d), incorporated as Conditions of Approval;
3. Approve General Plan Amendment A14-0001 based on the Findings;
4. Approve amendments to the El Dorado Hills Specific Plan SP86-0002-R based on the Findings;
5. Approve Rezone Z14-0004 based on the Findings; and
6. Approve Revisions to the Town Center East Planned Development PD94-0004R-2 based on the Findings and subject to the Conditions of Approval.

BACKGROUND

The project site is within the El Dorado Hills Town Center East (TCE) Commercial Development Plan area. The development plan was approved for a total of 925,000 square feet of commercial center and a 150-room hotel in August 1995 (Exhibit E). The TCE is within the Village T area of the El Dorado Hills Specific Plan (EDHSP), a master planned community that was approved in July 1988 (Exhibit F). The EDHSP was approved for a total of 6,162 dwelling

units and approximately 2.4 million square foot of commercial development within 22 village areas comprising 3,896 acres. The portion of the EDHSP area north of Highway 50 is the Serrano Master Planned Community, which has a current dwelling unit count of 3,978 and open space area totaling 1,029 acres. The projected dwelling unit buildout count in Serrano is 4,911 units. The majority of the commercial area is located south of Highway 50 within Villages T (Town Center East Development Plan) and U (Town Center West Development Plan). Both Town Centers were not designated for any residential use.

Development within the TCE PD was designated within Planning Areas 1 through 4 with specific identified uses corresponding to the TCE Design Guidelines and Development Standards. Development within the TCE occurred in phases with the construction of internal roads, wetland corridor (Town Center Lake) and trails, and the majority of the planned commercial buildings including a movie theater and several medium to large retail stores. The project site, which is located in Planning Area 2, has remained vacant, although a portion of the site (APNs 121-290-61 and -62) was designated for a hotel in 2008 and APN 121-290-60 was identified for potential retail shops with a maximum floor area of 10,000 square feet. Currently, a total of 687,183 square feet of commercial area has been built, with an additional 177,339 square feet planned/committed for future construction. The TCE is currently established such that the amount of commercial floor area is not limited within the designated Planning Areas as long as proposed use is consistent with the identified uses in the Planning Area and that the maximum floor area and hotel room counts are not exceeded. The TCE is managed by the Town Center Management Group.

The Board of Supervisors considered a Pre-Application/Conceptual Review for the project at its December 10, 2013, public hearing. The purpose of the informal workshop was to assist in identifying potential project issues and solutions and provide early feedback to the applicant prior to formal development application. Public testimony was received for the project and, though no substantive input was provided, the Board was conceptually in favor of the project.

The project application was officially submitted on January 30, 2014.

ANALYSIS

The proposed 250-unit apartment complex is a unique residential project in El Dorado Hills. The complex would be surrounded by existing commercial uses and have direct access to public infrastructure and recreational amenities within the TCE and in the immediate area. Construction of the complex would promote a mixed use development concept by concentrating a variety of uses in an intensely developed area that provide opportunities for employment as well as enhance the commercial business in the TCE.

Site Description and Adjacent Lands: Exhibit G details the site location and adjacent uses. The site is bordered by private roads on the north (Mercedes Lane), east (Vine Street), and south (Town Center Blvd) and by a drainage area (Town Center Lake) to the west. The roads connect to major county roads including White Rock Road to the south and Latrobe Road to the west. The site is surrounded by existing commercial development on all sides. The site topography slightly drains from east to west.

Roads, drainage, and other amenities within the TCE are privately maintained by the Town Center Management Group.

Project Description: To facilitate the proposed 250-unit apartment, several entitlements are necessary. As detailed in Exhibit H, the entitlements include an amendment to the General Plan adding a policy that would increase the maximum residential density; an amendment to the El Dorado Hills Specific Plan text designating the site “Urban Infill Residential” and incorporating multifamily residential use, density, and related standards for the project site; rezone of the site from General Commercial-Planned Development (CG-PD) to Multifamily Residential-Planned Development and revisions to the RM-zone standards; and amendment to the TCE Development Plan to include the proposed multifamily residential apartment complex. Additional discussion related to the land use change is detailed under *Analysis of Project Issues*. The following is a summary of the proposed residential project:

Building and Site Design: Exhibits I through M detail the plans for the project. The proposed 250-unit apartment complex would be housed within a maximum 5-story, 60-foot-tall building. The units range from 576 square feet to 1,302 square feet in size with a mix of 62 percent studio/1-bedroom and 38 percent 2-bedroom. A 60-foot-tall parking garage would be constructed on site to serve the complex. The garage, which would accommodate a total of 436 stalls, is located in the middle of the complex surrounded on three sides by the residential building. Building materials, design, and architectural elements would blend with the existing design features and theme in the TCE.

Ornamental landscaping that matches the type of plants in the TCE would be planted within the interior common area and along the perimeter. Standard light fixtures, designed in conformance to TCE and County standards, would also be installed. Perimeter fencing, varying in height from 42 inches to 60 inches depending on frontage location, would also be installed within the project area.

The site would be served by on-site amenities including a bocce court, swimming pool, barbecue area, and fitness clubhouse. The exterior amenities and other commonly owned area encompass approximately 40 percent of the site.

Primary site access would be off Town Center Blvd. and secondary access off Vine Street. A 25-foot-wide emergency vehicular access that connects from Town Center Blvd. to Mercedes Lane is also proposed along Town Center Lake. Pedestrian paths would be provided that lead into the designated building accesses as well as provide connectivity to the existing sidewalks along the frontage roads which adjoin the existing paths within the TCE.

Site Improvements and Utilities: Exhibits N and O detail the preliminary plans for site improvements and infrastructure. Site construction would include re-grading to establish necessary pads and foundations, construction of retaining walls and site encroachment, and installation of underground utility lines (i.e., water, sewer, drainage, electrical, and fire sprinkler). Utility lines, which vary in size and location, would be connected to existing service lines along the frontage roads. Prior to commencement of any construction, the project proponent would be required to obtain various construction approvals including a Grading Permit, Improvement Plan, Facility Plan Report, and Building Permit.

Development Plan Standards: Exhibit P details the revised draft TCE design guidelines and development standards applicable to the project. The guidelines and standards, which would be consistent with and supplement the current TCE standards regulating the existing commercial

development, would apply to this site within the Planning Area 2 of the TCE Development Plan area.

The designs of the project will match the existing theme and aesthetics in the TCE. The development standards would incorporate the residential use and density, and the modified development standards such as building height, setbacks, site coverage, and impervious surface. As conditioned, the guidelines and standards would be subject to review by the Town Center East Design Review Committee, subject to verification by the County. Final Design Guidelines and Development Standards would be submitted prior to issuance of building permit.

ANALYSIS OF PROJECT ISSUES

1. Amendment to the General Plan and El Dorado Hills Specific Plan

As detailed in Exhibit H, the project would require an amendment to the General Plan Land Use Element adding a site-specific policy that would increase the current maximum residential density of 24 du/ac to 55 du/ac. The Multifamily Residential (MFR) land use designation currently allows a maximum density of 24 du/ac and is commonly associated with the development of apartment and townhome. The proposed density change would also require an amendment to the density standards in the El Dorado Hills Specific Plan. Currently, there is no multifamily residential development of any type in the county that exceeds this maximum density.

The project site is located within the El Dorado Hills Specific Plan, an adopted plan in the Community Region of El Dorado Hills. The EDHSP provides for a range of residential types and a variety of commercial uses. The site is within the adopted Town Center East Development Plan (Village T of the El Dorado Hills Specific Plan). The TCE was not designated for any residential use.

Locating the project the site in the TCE would convert commercial land to residential development, which would conflict with County policies that encourage continued development of commercial lands with entitlements, flat topography, convenient access to major roads, and available infrastructure. Though the type of commercial use and amount of floor area is currently undetermined, retaining the site for commercial use would achieve the established goals in the General Plan, Specific Plan, and TCE Development Plan in continuing to provide retail and employment opportunities in the county, and preventing sales tax leakage to nearby jurisdictions.

Locating residential use within or near nonresidential uses and near major transportation corridor has inherent nuisance impacts typically from noise, traffic, and odors. With its close proximity to Highway 50, Latrobe Road, and White Rock Road and internal circulation within the TCE, the apartment complex would be exposed to varying degrees of these impacts. The TCE also conducts occasional special events such as concerts, farmer's market, and carnival that attract additional patrons which could further exacerbate normal traffic and noise in the TCE.

However, placement of a residential use within land use patterns that include employment-generating uses is supported by state and local policies. Government Code Section 65890.1 promotes the types of land use patterns so as to minimize commuting, reduce traffic congestion, and improve air quality. The construction of an urban residential infill project in the immediate vicinity of the restaurants, shops, stores, and offices that have been developed at the Town

Center or in the nearby commercial uses of the El Dorado Hills Business Park, located approximately 1 mile south on Latrobe road, would further improve the jobs-housing balance.

The proposed project would also be supported by and be consistent with various policies of the General Plan. As discussed in the Findings for Approval, high-intense self-sustaining compact urban or suburban-type development that includes mixed-use development would be appropriate within the Community Region of the county where it can conveniently utilize existing public infrastructure and services necessary to serve the development while minimizing potential construction costs.

Multifamily residential use in the vicinity of commercial uses would enhance and stimulate businesses in the Town Center East. Future residents of the apartment complex would have convenient access to surrounding retail shops and a variety of recreational amenities in the area. The apartment complex would also add to the variety of residential types in the area that and cater to the needs of the community residents who differ in age, household size, and lifestyle.

The potential nuisance impacts on the proposed apartment complex have been analyzed in accordance with the applicable policies of the General Plan and in the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration. Air quality impacts from construction and operational emissions were determined to be less than significant subject to identified mitigation measures. Noise impacts from both transportation and non-transportation uses were determined to be less than significant through project design and use of standard building materials. Aesthetic impacts were also analyzed and found to be insignificant, as the project will be consistent with the existing architectural and design theme in the TCE. Circulation and traffic concerns have also been evaluated in the Traffic Impact Study, which concluded that project impacts to specific intersections and road segments are reduced to less than significant with application of mitigation measures.

The potential nuisance from special events within the TCE could be resolved with issuance of advanced disclosure and notification to the future residents of the complex. Future apartment management would need to fully coordinate the residents' concerns with the Town Center Management Group in an effort to resolve any safety and nuisance issues.

2. Rezone and Amendment to Town Center East Development Plan

As detailed in Exhibit H and consistent with the amendments to the General Plan and the El Dorado Hills Specific Plan, the project would require a rezone of the project site to Multifamily Residential-Planned Development (RM-PD) and revisions to applicable zone standards and TCE standards including setbacks, building height, and building coverage. As part of the Planned Development Plan, apartment complex has been designed to be suitably self-contained within its boundaries served by its own necessary amenities as well existing amenities and infrastructures in TCE. Staff has reviewed the proposed standards and determined them to be appropriate within the TCE setting, in adherent to the concept of Planned Development and to applicable policies of the General Plan.

3. Environmental Review

A Subsequent Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) has been prepared to determine the extent of the project's potential environmental impacts, in accordance with CEQA
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Section 15162 (Exhibit Q). CEQA Guidelines 15063(c)(3)(D) provides that earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering off program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or negative declaration. The County adopted a Negative Declaration for the TCE project, for which an environmental checklist and evaluation (“Environmental Evaluation”) was prepared to support the Negative Declaration (Environmental Evaluation, File No. PD94-04, El Dorado Investors, Inc., May 19, 1995). The Environmental Evaluation and TCE ND relied on the certified EIR for the El Dorado Hills Specific Plan (EDHSP) (State Clearinghouse House No. 86122912) for general and cumulative impacts, and focused the evaluation on environmental impacts that were specific to the TCE project and were not addressed as significant impacts in the certified EDHSP EIR.

Staff has reviewed the project against the impacts previously evaluated in the TCE Environmental Evaluation and has determined the following areas were within the scope of and adequately analyzed in the TCE Environmental Evaluation: agriculture/forestry resources, cultural resources, geology/soils, hazards/hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, and mineral resources. The County has concluded that that the project would result in a less than significant impact or no impact on these resources, and such impacts were adequately analyzed and addressed by applicable mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis. This Initial Study for the proposed project identifies the environmental impact conclusions of the adopted TCE Environmental Evaluation.

The scope of the analysis in the Subsequent Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project focuses on specific resources including aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, greenhouse gases, transportation/traffic, and utilities/service systems. Potential significant impacts were specifically identified and evaluated for these resources, which would be reduced to a less than significant with application of specific mitigation measures.

4. Agency Comments and Conditions of Approval

Project information was distributed to various agencies as part of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) project review. Comments from various agencies including the Air Quality Management District, Transportation Division, El Dorado Hills Community Services District, and El Dorado Hills Fire Department were received and, as applicable, incorporated as Conditions of Approval for the project (Exhibit R). The list of conditions includes the specific mitigation measures identified in the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project. To ensure orderly implementation and construction, the project must fully comply with the Conditions of Approval, subject to verification by the affected agency.

Comments were also received from the local advisory group in El Dorado Hills, the Area Planning Advisory Committee (APAC). APAC concerns on the project include the potential for increased traffic in the TCE and along County roads, the doubling of current maximum residential density, and the potential loss of sales tax revenue with the conversion of the commercial use to residential. Although the subcommittee group of the APAC recommended conditional approval of the project, the full committee recommended non-support of the project.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The El Dorado Hills Apartments project presents a unique opportunity in the El Dorado Hills Town Center to promote a mixed-use concept where future residents have access to shopping, employment, and recreation, supported by existing public facilities and services. Although it would displace potential new commercial development in the Town Center that had been planned to create more opportunities for jobs, retail, and services, its development could foster numerous goals and policies of the General Plan and the El Dorado Hills Specific Plan in the creation of a fully integrated and self-sustaining community.

SUPPORT INFORMATION

Attachments to Staff Report:

Conditions of Approval
Findings

Exhibit A.....	Location Map
Exhibit B.....	Assessor's Parcel Map
Exhibit C.....	General Plan Land Use Map
Exhibit D.....	Zone District Map
Exhibit E.....	Original Town Center East Development Plan
Exhibit F.....	Land Use Map – El Dorado Hills Specific Plan
Exhibit G.....	Project Site and Surrounding Properties Land Uses
Exhibit H.....	Detailed Project Narrative, El Dorado Hills Specific Plan Land Use and Rezone Exhibit, and Matrix of Revised Development Standards for El Dorado Hills Apartments
Exhibit I.....	Preliminary Site Plan
Exhibit J.....	Preliminary Building Elevation Plan
Exhibit K.....	Preliminary Landscape Plan
Exhibit L.....	Preliminary Photometric Plan
Exhibit M.....	Preliminary Open Space/Amenities Plan
Exhibit N.....	Preliminary Grading Plans
Exhibit O.....	Preliminary Utility Plan
Exhibit P.....	Draft Design Guidelines and Development Standards for El Dorado Hills Apartments
Exhibit Q.....	Subsequent Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (Note: Electronic copies of this document and the Appendices can also be viewed at http://edcapps.edcgov.us/Planning/ProjectInquiryDisplay.asp? ProjectID=19894)
Exhibit R.....	Agency and Non-Agency Comments