

Planning Commission Minutes Excerpt
May 4, 2016

4.2 General Plan Amendment #16-01 and Zone Change #423, initiated by Eddie Laplante and Daniel Kazakos, on behalf of Landmark Hill Investments, LLC, property owner. This application is a request to change the General Plan and Zoning designations for an approximately 1.1 acre parcel, located on the north side of East 16th Street, approximately 245 feet east of G Street. The requested change is to amend the General Plan designation from Thoroughfare Commercial (CT) to High Density Residential (HD) and to change the Zoning designation from Thoroughfare Commercial (C-T) to High Density Residential (R-4) to allow the conversion of an existing 37-unit motel to a 41-unit supportive housing complex with an on-site manager's residence.

Commissioner PADILLA recused himself due to the fact that he had previously done business with one of the parties involved with the project and left the dais.

Associate Planner NELSON reviewed the report. For further information, refer to Staff Report #16-10.

Public testimony was opened at 7:31p.m.

Speakers from the Audience in Favor:

DANIEL KAZAKOS, Merced, the applicant, who provided the Commission with a packet regarding the 2015 HOPE Medical Respite Care Report.

GLORIA M. SANDOVAL, Merced

BRYAN BLEW

Neutral Speaker from the Audience:

TIM LAND, Merced

Speaker from the Audience in Opposition:

CINDY MORSE, Merced

DANIEL KAZAKOS, Merced, the applicant, spoke in rebuttal to comments made during the public testimony.

The Commission questioned the applicant regarding several concerns that included: background checks, the tenant to on-site clinic personnel ratio,

disciplinary procedures, instituting a Sober-Living Agreement for the tenants, the proximity of the site to a future project, the feasibility of so few cars being allowed on-site and how they would affect the tenants' mobility, inclusion of an incentive program to support tenant progression so this doesn't become permanent housing for an individual, whether this was for local residents or for those outside the County, and whether this project complied with the City's fire safety codes.

Director of Development Services/Chief Building Official GONZALVES confirmed that the project complied with necessary building and fire codes.

Mr. KAZAKOS responded to the Commission's questions. He explained that he did not intimately know the process regarding background checks, but added that the CoC (Continuum of Care) used a questionnaire that facilitates their process and allows for a variety of checks. With regard to discipline, Mr. KAZAKOS advised that if a tenant violated any conditions of the Housing Agreement, they would be removed from the program. He stated that the Sober-Living Agreement was not a pertinent measure of the Housing First model. In closing, Mr. KAZAKOS clarified that per federal guidelines, the program cannot exclude anyone from outside the county; however, there is a preference for Merced County residents.

Mr. BLEW gave a brief synopsis of his history and experience with Horizons Unlimited and the Housing First program and an overview of the structure of the program and its success in other counties.

Public testimony was completed at 8:54 p.m.

The majority of the Commissioners commended the applicant for his attempt to improve the homeless situation; however, they voiced concerns of the proximity of the project to the downtown area, the lack of a Sober-Living Agreement, and lack of incentives to move on to other housing options, and suggested the applicant find a more suitable location.

Commissioner BAKER suggested that the proposed improvements to the project site will add an aesthetic appeal to the area for those coming off the freeway. He added that the proposed project is a good start in the improvement of the homelessness situation.

M/S COLBY-SMOOT, and carried by the following vote, to recommend to the City Council denial of a Negative Declaration regarding Environmental Review #16-09, and denial of General Plan Amendment #16-01 and Zone Change #423 (RESOLUTION # 3066):

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AYES: Commissioners Dylina, McLeod, Smith, Smoot, and
Chairperson Colby

NOES: Commissioner Baker

ABSENT: None

ABSTAIN: Commissioner Padilla