

Design Advisory Committee
Sunland-Tujunga Neighborhood Council
Monday, December 4, 2006
North Valley Neighborhood City Hall

Approximately 96 in the audience.

Meeting called to order: 7:15 p.m.

Introductions of audience first, then DAC and City reps.

Roll Call Present: Lloyd Hitt; Cindy Cleghorn; Debby Beck; Ed Rock; Victor Castro; Mark Seigel, Saro Minassian Penny Blackwell. **Absent:** Tomi Lyn Bowling (out of town), Deborah Ray (ill). Also, Anita Cerna from City Planning and Dale Thrush from CD 2.

Anita Cerna gave an update and explanation of the mansionization law and how it applies to lot size and lot coverage in Sunland - Tujunga. She then answered stakeholders' questions. She also talked about a height requirement the City is proposing for neighborhoods that want a single story zoning code restriction.

Mark Seigel stated that stakeholders need to support the lowest density for the zoning hearing coming up.

Introduction of Dale Thrush, CD2 Planning Deputy:

1. (Former) Popeye's property: The tenant of that property, a check cashing operation, was informed that the City would consider compensating them for renovations they made on that property. The property doesn't meet with the Foothill Specific Plan. The City knows that mistakes were made in processing their application and allowing them to move forward. However, Mr. Thrush hasn't heard anything from the tenants since making the offer for compensation three months ago.

In response to this item, Joe Barrett said he had spoken to the current tenants and there are plans to open a rotisserie chicken restaurant at that location.

2. (Former) Mario Sterlings Restaurant: An application is on file, by environmental oversight committee, for a 49-unit condominium complex. He said the information they have received seems sketchy. He will be overseeing this application to find out what their obligations are in reference to this project.

Cindy Cleghorn added there are several other parcels of land involved on Oswego.

A stakeholder stated that there would be no undeveloped land or parks left in this area unless residents stand up and take action.

3. Small Lot Ordinance: Mark Seigel asked about the the Small Lot ordinance, where nearly 100% of space on a lot can be used for a house. Mr. Thrush said it is one of the more clever pieces of legislation. It gives contractors permission to build townhouses on very tiny lots, as small as 600 sq. ft. The real purpose of the ordinance was to give a different look to condo projects and it is seen as a way of generating more housing development revenue.

A stakeholder asked Mr. Thrush to stand up for what the community wants and said the community is very tired of having these type of projects imposed on the community.

4. Oro Vista Project: Mr. Thrush said he had a conversation about two weeks ago with a man (unknown) but is still waiting for information on whether an EIR is required.

5. Upcoming hearings:

____ Foothill, Tortas Mexican restaurant request for on site sale and consumption of beer and wine. Doesn't know if this is an establishment community would support. Haven't seen application.

6. 9641 Tujunga Canyon Blvd. is looking for a monument sign on property.

9627 & 9635 Hillhaven - three lots for housing. The owner is trying to build a second house but the project is being opposed by neighbors.

9340 Reverie Road - Has to do with Hillside ordinance. Hearing scheduled for Dec. 22.

Mr. Thrush then answered questions from the audience:

Nina Royal asked for a status report on Mekhitarist School on Foothill. Mr. Thrush said they are under a requirement to put together a Master Plan. He said they had that underway before they bought the former Arco Station at the corner. They should be coming back quite soon with a revised master plan.

She also asked about 7200 Foothill Blvd. (old Ford property). Mr. Thrush deferred to Debby Beck, who said that she had heard, about a week ago, that they would be issued the rest of their building permits any day. She explained that there was a problem with a Flood Control issue on their permit and that was bogging things down.

Question from a stakeholder on a Wentworth property that was proposing a junkyard. In response, someone commented that there had been a hearing before the Dept. of Building and Safety.

Elaine Brown asked for an update on a Plainview property that is building on the cliffs. Mr. Thrush said someone else from their office (Jackie Keene) was looking into this.

A stakeholder asked for an update on the Verdugo Hills Golf Course. Mr. Thrush spoke about the difficulties involved with getting funding to purchase this property.

Someone else asked whether it could be used as a 9-hole golf course since the property is now vacant and school children are using it for a place to hang out. He asked whether the Mayor of Glendale has responded to a request to help fund the purchase of this property. Mr. Thrush said he hasn't not heard anything new from him.

Home Depot Update:

Mr. Thrush said this is a project with a whole lot of moving parts. There is actual construction underway at the former K Mart by the Home Depot owners. He's waiting for a set of revised plans because changes were made in the original plans. They don't know yet what the changes were.

In terms of the specifics, the entrance doors seem to have grown larger than they were on the K Mart property. There are also temporary shoring structures.

Joe Barrett, No Home Depot then provided an update announcing a meeting the following Saturday to plan one or more demonstrations against Home Depot. He said they are very upset that HD has broken the promise that no work would take place at the site until the appeal was further along. While HD is supposed to be doing central remodeling, they are putting in steel girders around the building. The workers have told them that they are taking out the floor and that is why they have put up the steel girders. With the changes in the door size, Joe said this constitutes a change in the project (although Home Depot said that change is temporary).

Joe also said that in the back of the building, the loading dock has been altered, twice. In addition, HD has convinced the City that the former auto repair area is going to be a 'non use' area so the City has allowed them to continue working on it. However, the City Attorney is now investigating whether HD is, in fact, 'piece mealing' the project. Joe suspects HD will eventually use the auto use area for customer pick up and that's how they will get this past the City.

Joe said it would take extra measures to oppose these violations. The No Home Depot campaign is asking the City to shut down the project until these items are resolved.

Abby Diamond, No Home Depot, then gave a brief overview. Originally, they filed their appeal to HD's plans on Sept. 18, 2006, however, the paperwork got lost in the system. She said they are still waiting for information from the Planning Director on that. They filed the second half of their appeal on October 20, 2006. That appeal was necessary because the planning department said they needed to do mailing notifications the first time around, consequently, their original paperwork was considered incomplete. The paperwork requirement was very labor intensive. She was promised that certain things would be followed up by the City but nothing has been done to date.

Abby showed pictures of the construction going on at the site with possible violations. No Home Depot is asking the loading dock changes be investigated because they feel the permit wasn't granted properly. She asked Mr. Thrush for a copy of a report from the City inspector. He responded that he hasn't received any report and that there may not, in fact, be a report; it depends upon whether the inspector issued a citation or asked for an investigation. Abby then asked for a response to the 'no views' requirement on construction going on under the Foothill Specific Plan.

Victor Castro made a statement about the process No Home Depot has gone through and expressed that he feels the City officials haven't supported the residents' wishes.

Mr. Thrush commented on the approval process that Home Depot went through and what role Council member Greuel's office played in this, along with the City attorney.

David Cain spoke about how, at the November 6th DAC meeting, a City Code Inspector stated concern about a change of use by Home Depot.

Public Comment:

____ (woman): asked about structural changes and whether they should be considered 'use' as opposed to 'non-use.'

Mr. Kaney (???) asked about attorney/client privilege in regards to the City Attorney. Mr. Thrush said the City Attorney doesn't talk about his cases in public.

____ (woman): asked about the structure and where a corridor was that leads to the non-use area. Abby responded to the question saying she doesn't feel the public should be allowed to walk through this area.

Cindy Cleghorn said there were so many gray areas still and that with the construction going on and the shoring up, that it is indeed a project. She feels the public deserves the full environmental reviews appropriate to this type of project. On Nov. 6th, she noted there was an issue with the plans. She said she was

surprised Council member Greuel's office still hadn't obtained a copy of the plans. She asked what efforts could be made to get the plans. Mr. Thrush said he would follow up.

Cindy then said she remembered there was a pharmacy use, a restaurant, and a liquor license use at the former KMart. She asked how these uses play into the overall use changes requested by HD. Mr. Thrush said he doubts the liquor sale and pharmacy were separated out in the plan, but he wasn't sure about the restaurant use.

In reference to the inspection done, Cindy noted that usually, inspectors generate some sort of paperwork, even if it's only a slip of paper. She believes that somewhere there is paperwork from the inspector's visit to the site and asked that Mr. Thrush help them in obtaining it because the community should have access to that report. She said it's important to know what he saw. She also wondered what plans he was referring to when he went to the site and based on that, could they receive a copy of those plans?

Elaine Brown asked about CEQA (CA Environmental Quality Act) – She said that the community keeps hearing there's no environmental issue. Should CEQA be involved? Mr. Thrush said before you get a CEQA analysis, you have to meet the definition of a project, under the law.

Debby Beck asked why they are still waiting for HD's lawyer to produce the current plans? Mr. Thrush said there are several sets of plans: Building and Safety has a set but they only have one set and since there are 'security references,' they aren't going to let it go. They are trying to borrow a set from the HD attorney because it is not crucial that he have that set, since he's not involved in the construction.

Debby felt it shouldn't take a month for them to make a copy for the DAC.

_____ (woman) asked why Home Depot is being allowed to 'piece meal' the project. She said the City officials are supposed to be speaking up for the community but instead, they are letting them down. She referred to a sign not being put up about HD coming to the property in the first place. She also referred to construction currently going on. She asked when people would be accountable to the community.

Debby asked again about getting a set of plans from the attorney and how long it would take. (couldn't hear response).

_____ (woman) spoke about the terminology defining a project. She asked about the auto activity and the structural bracing being added to the exterior of the building. How they can be assured that those costs don't push the threshold over

50%? Mr. Thrush said that is part of the deal. They have asked for the planning department's response on over or under the 50%.

Mr. Thrush then added that his understanding is that they are not cleaning up whatever is on the ground...they aren't doing anything...

___(man) asked why aren't they doing (inaudible)?

Mark Seigel said it was because it would raise the price above the 50% mark.

Jeannine Crowley commented (inaudible).

___(man) suggested that the City, Council member Greuel's office, and Bldg. & Safety look at any way possible to put a stop to this project since they aren't abiding by the rules and regulations. Otherwise, he said the community would sue the City.

___(woman) ___ asked whom Mr. Thrush is representing and whether somebody is paying him.

___(woman) asked why Council member Greuel couldn't get the plans. Mr. Thrush said they have made the request already.

___(woman) asked if stakeholders can request a copy of the plans and if so, who to request these of. Mr. Thrush suggested making a request to Bldg. & Safety.

___(man) thanked Mr. Thrush for answering the community's questions, saying CD2 has been very helpful. However, he said their efforts are not enough. They need to take a more aggressive stance. He believes Council member Greuel hasn't utilized all her powers to help and this has left them waiting for information on their appeal, 'languishing on the sidelines.' He noted that there are many controversial issues going on with the building and the only option left is to stop the project until these issues are resolved.

___(man) asked for clarification on the floors and the walls and why there has been a change in the information being told to the public about the exterior wall. Mr. Thrush clarified how the floors needs to be removed, how the foundation is being changed, without changing the structure.

___(woman) noted that the contractor is saying otherwise.

Abby Diamond said they that when they visited the site last Saturday, they were told the walls were being shored up so they wouldn't fall down. Joe added that

they also talked to a different set of workers about what they were doing. They were told they were pulling up the floor.

____(man) noted that the integrity of the building is being changed and this is clearly a structural change.

Abby asked if the separation wall is being shored up, are the braces on the sales/retail side or the garage side? If they are on the garage side, then they are using it for construction purposes.

Victor Castro asked why an STNC board or DAC committee member didn't sit in on the City's meeting a week or so ago. Dale it wasn't considered. Perhaps in the future this can be arranged.

Victor Castro said that the DAC would be presenting a motion to the STNC asking the Council office to do what is right in the best interest of the stakeholders and detailing the areas of conflict. He would even put forth to the motion to City Council, it will be their last chance to do what is right by the community.

Abby Diamond announced a planning meeting for Saturday, Dec. 9th at North Valley City Hall.

- Break announced -

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- DAC Meeting resumes -

Fred Gaines spoke, representing 6924 Valmont (Valmont Villa L.C.), the property owner for a 14-unit detached town home construction. He had returned to the DAC with final plans on the details of colors and materials they proposed for usage on their construction project. They also brought examples of windows. The third issue had to do with removal of an oak tree. Mr. Gaines said they would try to relocate the tree on the site.

Nina suggested that this project would create a lot of traffic. She asked about driveways and entrances to the site. Mr. Gaines showed a diagram of how the project will sit on the street.

Vic Castro said they have already reviewed the entire project and don't have to see the presentation again.

Cindy Cleghorn read from the July 17th minutes about the presentation. The motion to approve Valmont Villa failed due to concerns the DAC still had about this project. Cindy listed what these concerns were.

A board member asked about variances that have since been approved. Nina Royal asked when the plan was approved. Cindy said that hearing took place July 25th, one week after the STNC meeting. Nina noted that she was upset because she did not receive a notice to the public hearing.

Debby Beck said that although some changes were made to the design, they were looking for a 'mixing up' of architectural styles to make it fit in with the character of the neighborhood. She asked if the developer could still work on that.

While Mr. Gaines was researching this inquiry, STNC Chairperson Cindy Cleghorn reminded the board that the STNC meeting will be at North Valley City Hall instead of Mt. Gleason Middle School on Dec. 13. The school is holding its holiday party that same night. Also, she announced that the STNC Winter Holiday Spirit Awards are for recognition of good holiday decorations. Anyone with a nomination of a nicely decorated property can notify the STNC office and speak with Ed Rock.

Mr. Gaines then commented on changes made to the color palette and to the roof colors.

The Committee then discussed concerns read from a letter from (inaudible)_____. One of these regarded changes to unit sizes.

Cindy asked whether the units had originally been presented as larger. Mr. Gaines said they had reduced two of the units. She asked whether the architectural styles had been addressed. Mr. Gaines was also asked about the size of the yards. **Cindy moved, "That the DAC recommends approval of the updated design plans as presented with a preference for the use of river rock in accordance with the Foothill Blvd. Corridor Specific Plan and keeping the oak tree on the property." Seconded by Ed Rock.**

Roll call vote: 6 in favor, 1 opposed, 2 abstain. Motion passed.

Presentation: 9641 Tujunga Canyon Blvd.: Pastor of Canyon Harvest (Open Bible) Church in Tujunga. Wants to replace the monument sign that is on their property with an LED sign that lights up. Wants to put the sign at the set back. He said the sign was approved by the City.

Committee members asked if it would obstruct the view for motorists. He said it would not. He was asked why they need a new sign. He said because the name of the church has changed. Also, the previous sign was damaged. He was asked how much information would be generated on the sign and whether the sign would cause problems for neighbors. He said they have received 21 signatures of approval from neighbors. He added that he would shut the sign down at night

so it doesn't disturb neighbors. He said they have looked at dozens of signs and feel it's the best one.

Mark Seigel moved that DAC approve the project. Lloyd Hitt seconded the motion. Motion passed with one abstention.

Cindy thanked the representatives from the church for coming to the meeting and staying so late. She asked for them to return to give input on other projects affecting Tujunga Canyon Blvd.

The Board then discussed a liquor license hearing for Tortas, which Cindy said she would attend on December 8th.

Cindy said she had recently attended a cell phone tower hearing for 6706 and 6724 Foothill Boulevard, for a conditional use permit to install a wireless telecommunications facility consisting of six panel antennas mounted behind a proposed FRP screen wall, four equipment cabinets at rooftop, power and telco cabinets, one GPS antenna and one microwave antenna. The property is a combination of five-level, rectangular-shaped, interior lots located on the south side of Foothill Blvd. She felt the design could be improved upon color-wise and hopes we can have input when the project comes to that stage of the City's process. She read from the Staff Report that it indicates the site does not sit within any specific plans or interim control ordinances. This part of the report is in error and should be brought to the attention of the City staff.

Cindy suggests a separate meeting day and time to discuss DAC policies since we did not get time for that discussion tonight.

She then mentioned that there had been some harsh comments made to Dale Thrush during the meeting and that this may have led to his sudden departure when his presentation was finished.

The committee then discussed whether the DAC chairman should have cut off the comments by stakeholders when they began to make accusations to this City official.

Meeting adjourned at 10:50 p.m.

Minutes prepared from tape by Pat Kramer, Apple One