

LARKSPUR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 3 2004

The Larkspur Planning Commission was convened at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers by Chair Ratner.

Commissioners Present: Chair David Ratner, Commissioners Monte Deignan, Helen Heitkamp, Chris McCluney, Jeff Stahl

Staff Present: Nancy Kaufman, Planning Director

**OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION**

No one spoke during this time.

**PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

- The City Council will consider the revised Draft Housing Element, the Omnibus Ordinance, and the Fire Safety Resolution at their February 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- She distributed letters received by staff regarding tonight's agenda item.
- She asked members of the audience to fill out "speaker slips".

**AGENDA ITEM**

**PUBLIC HEARING**

1. SP 01-100: REVISED DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT ON THE CENTRAL LARKSPUR SPECIFIC PLAN

(This item was continued from January 14, 2004)

Project Location: Project site encompasses 22-acres bordered by Magnolia Avenue on the west East Ward Street, Meadow Drive, and Larkspur Creek on the south; Larkspur Creek on the east, and Doherty Drive on the north. In addition, the project site includes the entire Doherty Drive right-of-way from Magnolia Avenue east to the City limit (5.58 acres). Initiated by the City of Larkspur. Project Description: The Central Larkspur Specific Plan is a comprehensive plan for development in the project area. The Specific Plan addresses the following issues: the distribution, location and intensity of land uses, including open space; the location and capacity of major infrastructure systems, including transportation, sewerage, and stormwater drainage; standards and criteria for development and utilization of natural resources; and implementation measures. The Specific Plan envisions development of mixed-use retail, residential development and public parking, fronting on Magnolia Boulevard. Approximately 85 residential dwellings would be developed on the eastern two-thirds of the property. The project includes amendments to the General Plan and the Downtown Specific Plan, adoption of the Specific Plan, and rezoning of Subarea 3, the Niven Property, to Planned Development District, with the adoption of the Specific Plan as the Preliminary Development Plan.

Chair Ratner stated the purpose of the hearing was to receive comments on the adequacy of the Environmental Impact Report in identifying and analyzing the possible impacts of the Specific Plan on the environment and ways in which they may be mitigated. It is not to discuss the pros and cons of the Specific Plan. Written comments should be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on February 12<sup>th</sup>. He stated the consultants from EDAW were not able to attend the meeting due to a traffic accident on Highway 80.

Chair Ratner opened the Public Hearing.

Ms. Marianne Rafter, Echo Place, member of the Larkspur Library Board of Trustees, made the following comments:

- The Library Board members noticed there is no specific mention in the Draft EIR of having a new library building in any of the subareas. In the various drafts of the CLASP, a new library was mentioned as a possibility.
- The Library Board would like to ensure that the wording in the draft and final EIR provides for the possibility of adding a library in one of the designated subareas.
- Ms. Rafter provided staff a written copy of her comments (one page).

Ms. Kathleen Geal, Ward Street, made the following comments:

- There were three areas that were not adequately researched: 1) hotel- the different scenarios include a hotel and there is not data or market analysis supporting the need for a hotel, 2) traffic- the impact to Rice Lane and Ward Street has not been considered; when the properties develop more people will use Rice Lane to get to Cane Street; there will be an increase in traffic and the danger to children and pets on Rice Lane, 3) noise- noise will be a big issue, particularly from restaurant fans and delivery trucks; the existing noise levels probably exceed the allowable decibel levels for a residential area.

Ms Nancy Wenenger, Elm Avenue, speaking on behalf of the Marin County Bicycle Coalition, made the following comments:

- The Marin County Bicycle Coalition is very happy with the document and that changes have been made that reflect the Coalitions earlier comments.
- They are concerned about parking on the railroad right-of-way and disagree with the conclusion that the impacts will be less than significant. They feel this will significantly impact the view corridors and degrade the environment. Parking on the railroad right-of-way should be prohibited.
- The new bicycle path that will go through the plan area and north of Doherty should be cited in the document as a Class 2 and not Class 3 path.
- Ms Wenenger provided staff with a two-page letter from the Coalition.

Mr. James Holmes, Madrone Avenue, made the following comments:

- He distributed a 4-page letter addressing some technical points.
- There is the potential to lose National Register Listing in the downtown area if the number of buildings developed disrupt the ratio of historic to non-historic buildings. This is a potentially significant impact that is not mentioned in the Historic Resources Section.
- There are some loaded terms in the document, such as “fair share,” when referring to regional housing needs. He felt this was a value-laden term that assumes facts not in evidence and he would suggest more value neutral terms, such as “State mandated housing.” The term used for one of the alternatives, “residential focus”, was a euphemism and should be replaced by the term “high density”.
- The document had a lot of good information about the plan but “ran out of gas” at the end when the other alternatives were analyzed. They did not differentiate between the impacts of those alternatives in two respects- the population impact and the visual/aesthetics impact. These impacts should be looked at in terms of the immediate area rather than the entire City. In terms of the visual analysis, there is a big difference between tall structures and lower structures with landscaping. When comparing to surrounding uses, there are different types of uses in the area and it depends on which ones are looked at. Relative to density, the size of buildings makes a difference. Tall buildings across from the Blue Rock with create a canyon affect. The EIR has to be more discriminating and differentiating in these areas.

Chair Ratner closed the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Stahl provided the following comments:

- He made his comments at the last meeting.

Commissioner Heitkamp provided the following comments:

- The National Register rating is a concern and the downtown area must maintain certain ratios of contributing to non-contributing buildings.

- The Draft EIR was discussed at the last Heritage Preservation Board meeting and the Board will be submitting a letter with comments.

Commissioner McCluney provided the following comments:

- He was satisfied with the document as written.

Commissioner Deignan provided the following comments:

- There were some very good comments from the public.
- He agreed with the comments regarding the potential for a change in the character in the downtown area.
- He was concerned about the height and visual impact issues.

Chair Ratner provided the following comments:

- The document was adequate in terms of a description of the project.
- He was pleased they were making progress.
- He asked staff to take the matter under advisement and bring back a Final EIR the Commission can act upon and forward to the City Council.

Planning Director Kaufman reiterated that the deadline for written comments was February 12<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m.

Chair Ratner thanked everyone for his or her comments.

## **BUSINESS ITEMS**

### 1. Commissioner's Reports

There were no reports.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis  
Recording Secretary