

**TOWN OF SAN ANSELMO
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES OF JUNE 7, 2010**

Commissioners Present: Brown, Harris, Krebs, Overberger, Schinner, Sisich, Zwick
Commissioners Absent: None

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Brown called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION

No one spoke.

PLANNING AND BUILDING DIRECTOR REPORT

Interim Planning Director Diane Henderson advised that the proposed Green Ordinance will be presented to the Town Council on June 22 and that there will not be a Planning Commission meeting on July 5 due to the holiday.

PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes of Planning Commission Meeting May 17, 2010

M/s Schinner/Overberger, to approve the minutes of May 17, 2010.

Ayes: Brown, Krebs, Overberger, Schinner, Sisich, Zwick

Abstained: Harris

REGULAR AGENDA

1. **RZ-1001 / DR-1008–Thomas Arntz , 850 Sir Francis Drake Boulevard (Red Hill Shopping Center), APN 006-061-23**, Specific Planned Development (SPD) Amendment and Design Review for proposed exterior improvements including two new plazas, landscaping, exterior lighting, signage and accessible pathways. Building facade improvements include painting and lighting of arcades. The project site is located in the Specific Planned Development (SPD) Zoning District. (Staff person: Boyle)

Senior Planner Phil Boyle presented the staff report, advising that he was able to make the findings for amendment to the Specific Planned Development and design review and recommends approval with the conditions noted in the staff report. Boyle noted that the applicant team was on hand to present the project in detail.

Brown asked if there were any questions of staff before asking the applicant to present the project.

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Craig Semmelmeier, Principal, Main Street Property Services, Inc., introduced Sudhish Mohindroo, Principal, SZFM Design Studio.

Mohindroo presented a Powerpoint report outlining the planned improvements to the Red Hill Shopping Center. Specifically, the proposal includes: (1) the creation of a central plaza which would connect the two ends of the parking lot; (2) storefront and signage improvements for the entire complex; (3) plaza improvements designed so as to have no impact on the existing parking count or building size; (4) no net change in the existing number of buildings; (5) an increase in landscaping, devoting more space to green areas and pedestrian plaza areas.

Mohindroo introduced Landscape Architect Ralph J. Alexander to discuss the plant materials under consideration for the project.

Alexander advised that the plants will be water-efficient, environmentally friendly, and green in rating. The actual plants will have color in both foliage and flower for year-round color. He added that the project includes saving as many of the existing trees as possible.

Commissioner Sisich applauded the effort to upgrade the center and asked what is planned in terms of landscape improvements along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard.

Alexander stated that presently the plant materials along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard are either *Escallonia fradesii* or *rubra*. When first inspected, the plants were straggly and short; in the time the project has been developed, however, they have taken life and grown. They are now gaining enough height to begin screening cars. Alexander feels that as the plants are thriving, little more than maintenance instructions will be required, suggesting that they be given enough height to hide the bumper grill headlight area of the cars so that light is not reflecting back on the street.

Sisich asked if there were any proposed changes in the number of parking spaces.

Mohindroo responded that 350 spaces will be maintained. A few spaces are being lost to the creation of a more sweeping outdoor patio in one area, and a few are being added to the west end, so there is no net change.

Sisich observed that a speeding traffic problem exists in the drive aisle by the gas station.

Mohindroo agreed that it should be improved with stop signage other than that which is painted on the ground.

Sisich asked what the composition of retail spaces will be in the area of the newly designed plaza on the western side of the center by Sunny Hills Drive. Specifically, Sisich asked if the Round Table Pizza franchise space would be subdivided for the creation of smaller cafes.

Semmelmeier responded that plans are to keep the existing space in its current configuration, as it is the right size of restaurant for serving the plaza. The Round Table operation is dated and not conducive to outdoor seating. Plans are to replace the pizzeria with a new tenant who can embrace and use the plaza while maintaining the casual and family-oriented atmosphere.

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Commissioner Zwick observed that most applications coming before the Planning Commission from the center have been for landscaping and minor signage changes. He asked if this will remain the case.

Boyle responded that in the future, most minor changes will be examined in the context of the landlord's requirements and the guidelines as approved by the Planning Commission; this will reduce the level of staff work required.

Zwick asked if the written guidelines will be consistent with the Town's existing sign ordinance.

Mohindroo observed that the Town's sign ordinance requirements will not be loosened in the guidelines and in some instances the guidelines may even be more restrictive. Measures will be taken to ensure that each applicant adheres to the guidelines with the coming and going of tenants. Town staff will be consulted if there is any gray area.

Henderson confirmed that this is a specific plan and what is approved becomes the zoning on the property. Henderson has worked with Mohindroo on previous projects, specifically at Town Center in Corte Madera, a project very similar to this one. In that instance, guidelines were established and approved by the Planning Commission and any storefront or signage changes must be signed off by the landlord's architect as meeting the guidelines before it goes to staff. Henderson noted that Corte Madera also has very strict guidelines that have consistently been met by the Town Center.

Zwick asked if the plan includes internally illuminated signage or very bright, scoop lighting.

Mohindroo responded that any future tenants desiring such lighting will be given the choice of either adding a dimmer which will be set by the guidelines or of providing a mock-up showing lighting with two or three different light bulbs. This choice will be a condition of approval.

Zwick asked about specific guidelines with regard to shear walls limiting the area of blank walling on tenant frontage.

Mohindroo indicated that the guidelines request provision of a vitrine, show window, or tile mural to break up the monotony of blank walls on tenant frontage. He agreed that the language for requirements in this regard should be strengthened.

Zwick asked for an accounting of existing and planned trees.

Mohindroo said a total of five trees will be removed and 13 planted.

Zwick noted that the trees on western side of plaza are not thriving.

Mohindroo observed that the liquid ambers in that location were topped at some point.

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Alexander confirmed that topping is always detrimental to trees and suggested that the trees are also suffering from a lack of water and from reflected heat. He assured all present that the soil will be tested and adjustments made to give all plants and trees enough room to grow properly. He is planning a deep water irrigation system for the trees and a separate system for ground cover and shrubs.

Zwick noted the speed table at the center plaza, adding that pedestrian crosswalks in that area do not seem very well defined.

Mohindroo observed that the speed table was designed in such a way as to make clear that pedestrians have the right of way, as in the case of a conventional intersection at which a vehicle turning right is required to stop for pedestrian traffic.

Zwick encouraged the establishment of pedestrian guidelines. He further requested specific identification of pervious and impervious surfacing.

Commissioner Krebs appreciated efforts to upgrade the center and is looking forward to having the project completed. As mentioned in connection with the design guidelines, the goal seems to be non-standardization while maintaining a degree of consistency. He asked if it is the design team's expectation that the center's appearance will be slowly evolving as tenants change.

Mohindroo responded that new tenants and renewing tenants will need to conform to the sign criteria. Existing tenants with long leases will be looked at on a case-by-case basis. Cost is usually the principle issue and the landlord will consider bearing the cost of changes when the changes are deemed necessary. It has been his experience that tenant resistance may be encountered at first, and that there is a positive shift in opinion when tenants see the new signage.

Krebs noted that Boyle had mentioned signage will be managed by the landlord and asked when it will go to staff for approval.

Boyle stated that if a sign is being proposed which goes beyond the Town's guidelines, i.e., if a sign proposal presents a sign excessive in size or a large number of signs per tenant, the proposal will be brought to staff. He added that in looking at this project's proposed guidelines, he does not see anything inconsistent with the Town's guidelines.

Krebs observed that it seems as though there is a shift away from consistency to different-but-compatible as a criterion.

Boyle affirmed that this is the case.

Krebs pointed to the fourth condition of approval regarding the traffic signal at the main entrance facing Sir Francis Drake; he asked if there is an issue with reconfiguration in that area.

Boyle explained that Public Works simply wants to be able to confirm that everything is working correctly after reconfiguration.

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Krebs asked if there is a plan for Public Works to evaluate the changes at the west end of the center once the island is removed.

Boyle responded that there is no condition for additional review of that particular area at this time and that as the building permit application will be routed to Public Works for final approval, they, as well as the Ross Valley Fire Department, will be looking at aisle width.

Krebs suggested that Public Works look at the west end to seek confirmation in a similar way to the work that fronts Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, ensuring smooth traffic flow.

Krebs asked if neighbors have expressed any opposition to the project.

Semmelmeyer responded that no presentation has been made to neighbors thus far as the project calls for no additional square footage and no changes to existing uses.

Krebs asked if tenants had been consulted.

Semmelmeyer confirmed that meetings have been held with tenants on a one-by-one basis, observing that some tenants are excited by the proposed changes while others are a little hesitant.

Henderson added that notices have been sent to neighbors and tenants of the center, making them aware of the current meeting.

Harris asked what residual control the Town retains if this project is approved as far as design review and other planning issues.

Boyle confirmed that the landlord will be the gatekeeper of everything that is covered by the guidelines and the plans. By the same token, if Safeway, for example, comes in with a major change to its front façade, the matter will come before the Planning Commission.

Harris asked what occurs if signage comes in larger than what town parameters allow.

Mohindroo assured all present that the written guidelines are in most instances more, and never less, restrictive than the Town's, adding that he is required to advise staff if for any reason a tenant is wanting something other than what is allowed by the Town.

Brown asked for confirmation that the Town's ordinance specifies one square footage of signage for each lineal foot of tenant frontage.

Boyle affirmed.

Commissioner Harris asked if signs would be permitted above the roof ridge line.

Mohindroo responded that they would not.

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Harris asked if there were any plans to change the operating hours of the stores.

Mohindroo responded that there were no such plans.

Harris mentioned plans for the new circulation element at the west end of the center, changing the divided highway into a two-in-one direction. He observed that some spaces on the extreme western end may find themselves backing into the ingress, adding that this can be a hazard when traffic turns the corner at high speeds. He suggests that Public Works fully vet the new plan.

Harris asked if there is a plan to paint the building.

Mohindroo affirmed that the building will be painted and a discussion of paint colors ensued. Mohindroo advised that Safeway and CVS make their own applications for changes in paint color and that this project's proposed colors were chosen in consideration of the existing colors of the two anchor tenants.

Harris asked if there is a proposal for any new landscaping between the west end parking lot and the gas station.

Alexander advised that he is working in cooperation with the gas station owner on a screening proposal potentially involving a trellis panel.

Harris asked about plans for the east end of the center and the rear walls of the buildings.

Mohindroo confirmed that storefront and signage guidelines will apply to the east end as well; only Safeway and CVS make their own applications directly to the Town. Also, the rear walls of the buildings will be painted.

Harris asked why there were no current plans for carrying over some of the design elements, such as pavers and stone walls, to the plaza between CVS and Safeway.

Mohindroo noted that for pragmatic reasons, including financial considerations, they have chosen the area designated as Phase One in the plans for the current project, knowing full well that they will be working with CVS and Safeway in Phase Two.

Semmelmeyer added that with different planters, benches, light fixtures, and stencil elements carried through the entire property, it won't be necessary to change the hardscape in that section of the center, noting that these elements will tie the sections together. Further, subtle changes to the storefronts will transform that area, store by store. He suggested that the center is a living, breathing entity that is always evolving and the way a project like this stays contemporary is to have small, continuous improvements made to it. As tenants renovate their storefronts, there will be less of a reliance on signage as more and more of the tenant's identity emerges through paint color and design consistency.

Harris asked why the plan does not address the hardscape between CVS and Safeway.

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Mohindroo stated that they do not have a good way of addressing this area at this time and suggested that a condition be set forth requiring that it be considered within a year. He added that lighting and painting will occur there.

Semmelmeyer added that the desire is to complete a high quality upgrade and that the funds are not available to do anything substantial in that area today. He added that changing the hardscape in that area would be extremely disruptive to the tenants and the current economic downturn is also a deterrent.

Commissioner Schinner asked if a Specific Planned Development (SPD) is not subject to the Town's signage ordinance.

Henderson explained that an SPD becomes the zoning on the property and establishes zoning requirements that can be either more or less stringent than what the zoning code allows.

Schinner asked if language stating "shall be subject to San Anselmo's sign ordinance requirements" should be added to the written guidelines.

Henderson noted that language has been drafted to reflect sign dimensions required in the Town's sign ordinance.

Schinner asked about the possibility of including requirements restricting aspects other than dimensions to the guidelines.

Henderson replied that adopting the guidelines as standards is a more creative approach that does not limit the Town's authority because the projects continue to come to staff. She suggested that if problems develop with this approach in the future, they can be addressed at that time.

Commissioner Overberger asked if efforts will be made to pull away some of the paving from the existing trees to give them a chance to thrive.

Alexander said that the landscaping will be increased around the trees.

Overberger noted some problems with traffic flow along the west end of the center, from the 76 Station to Sir Francis Drake Boulevard; the fact that the area serves as truck parking complicates the entire plan.

Mohindroo stated that the intent is to solve parking and traffic problems even if they are not strictly within the blue lines indicating the area of work.

Overberger asked for confirmation that the landlord will maintain the landscaping.

Semmelmeyer responded that as there will be a substantial investment in upgrading the center, maintaining it in a first class manner is a priority.

Brown observed that the main entry and exit traffic lanes are quite narrow.

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Mohindroo stated that this is going to change; the turn will be softer and he will have a civil engineer review it once again to confirm that the change will be an improvement.

Brown asked how the new pavers will be accommodated.

Mohindroo noted that some of the driver aisle, which was overly generous, was removed. The aisle is now 26 feet, which is conforming and quite comfortable in his opinion.

Brown asked for clarification regarding the proposed festoon lights in the patio areas.

Mohindroo replied that the lights were low wattage and that they meet requirements of outdoor patio lighting on an on-going basis, adding that other proposed lights have shields so that they don't go up into the night sky.

Brown suggested that cladding planter walls with stone to link up the area between CVS and Safeway is a fairly innocuous measure in terms of tenant disruptions and it may resolve concerns about this area.

Mohindroo agreed and advised that a plan would be conceived to come back and change the accessories, including cutting the walls down and bringing in different planters.

Brown encouraged firming up the signage guidelines from what they are now. He would like to see more delineation than just dimensions, and confirmation that there will be no signs above the roof ridge line.

Mohindroo agreed to do so, adding that he is hoping for a variety of signage

Brown suggested placing all lighted tenant signs on a house panel so that the landlord maintains control of lighting. He further suggested that a map of the center be created to show specific areas in which awnings can be placed so that no awnings are placed in front of the arcade. He asked if there was a plan for a monument sign for tenants.

Mohindroo responded that there are no plans for a monument sign.

Brown asked if the sign criteria differentiate between major and minor tenants.

Mohindroo stated that the two anchor tenants, CVS and Safeway, have language in their leases ensuring that they can go directly to the Town with sign proposals.

Brown suggested specification on the maximum square footage allowed for any individual sign.

Mohindroo stated that aggregate signage cannot exceed one square foot for one linear foot of tenant frontage with a minimum of 25 square feet and a maximum of 100 square feet; additionally, each signage category has its own dimension limits.

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Brown suggested standardizing the lighting on exterior blade signs for consistency and asked if illumination of blade signs is proposed inside the arcade.

Mohindroo advised that they were allowing illumination of exterior blade signs, although many tenants will not feel the need for it. If a particular tenant wants spot lights, the lights will be done in an aesthetically pleasing manner that has no spill-over effect. Tenants will be restricted to spot lights that shine up only. He added that there is no problem with night sky because the lighting is inside an arcade.

Brown opened the discussion up to the public.

Jean Young, President of the Red Hill Merchants Association and owner of Gold Dreams Jewelry, believes that the plan is primarily a good idea, although she feels it is unfortunate that the plan was not brought to the merchants and she is uncertain as to how beneficial it will be to some of the merchants. She feels that some issues remain to be addressed.

Young is concerned that traffic continues to come down Shaw Drive and Sunny Hills Drive, cutting through the center to leave by the traffic light at Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. Further, games at Memorial Park require a lot of parking and attendees continue to park in front of stores rather than at the perimeter of the center as requested.

She believes the western plaza will definitely give some added interest to that side of the center but advises reconsideration of the four stairs, as she feels strongly that this area should be at least partially ramped. There have been many law suits instigated and Young sees an increase in stroller traffic to the mall. She's not sure the proposed bicycle bollard should be added as there are problems with cyclists and skateboarders riding through the arcade.

Young asked if in removing the trellis, the wisteria will also be removed.

Alexander affirmed.

Young observed that the replacement plants under consideration include pink jasmine and creeping fig, both of which require a lot of water and are not attractive year-round, whereas the existing wisteria could be trimmed back and treated as a tree. In back of the new Red Hill sign, she is requesting consideration of a non-deciduous plant rather than the planned crepe myrtle, ensuring attractive landscaping year-round.

Brown thanked Young for her comments, closed the public hearing, and brought the discussion back to the Planning Commissioners.

Zwick recalled that an SPD is already in existence for this property, specifically for Longs and Safeway, and wanted confirmation that the current plan is to modify that existing document.

Henderson affirmed.

Zwick asked if staff will be providing the previously approved SPD guidelines.

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Boyle advised that the guidelines for the original SPD created in 1973 are very brief.

Zwick suggested that the SPD should cover the portion of the center depicted in the site plan and include widening tree boxes, making compact spaces full-sized spaces, etc. He further suggested seeking a green island effect and retrofitting some of the catch basins with filters in the interest of sustainability.

Harris asked for confirmation that the applicant will take comments from tonight's meeting and return with revisions.

Mohindroo affirmed.

Overberger noted that there is a creek that runs under the center and that issues of stream runoff are related to that stream and the pipe located there.

Krebs noted that it would be helpful to meet with the merchants, if possible, although he imagines the neighbors are not as directly impacted.

Harris stated that the project appears to be an overall improvement but he is somewhat hesitant with where he sees the project going. He acknowledged that good business decisions must be made and hopes for something that suits the San Anselmo sensibility and maintains the Town's distinctiveness.

Sisich was unclear on plans for site furniture. He feels the landlord should provide site furniture for the area at Peet's Coffee and in the new west plaza. He also expressed hope that the speed table will slow drivers down. Finally, he thanked Young for her hard work on behalf of the Merchants' Association.

Brown requested Mohindroo to include a site furnishing plan upon his return to the Commission, as well as painting specifications and updated signage criteria.

He further recommended that Public Works look at the plans for the west end and suggested that the landlord may need to take responsibility for some of the signage if incongruity results in a hodgepodge of signage from differing eras.

Schinner added that bike racks should be included in the plan.

Mohindroo noted that two racks are proposed and believes Young's comments with regard to skateboarders and cyclists bear some consideration. He added that he will look into adding some lights on the west end perimeter.

M/s, Zwick/Harris, to continue consideration of the plan to a date uncertain. All ayes.

ITEMS FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

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None.

ADJOURNMENT TO THE MEETING OF JUNE 21, 2010

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Harris