



**PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES
TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2023**

CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the La Quinta Planning Commission was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Chairperson Currie.

PRESENT: Commissioners Caldwell, Guerrero, Hassett, McCune, Nieto, Tyerman, and Chairperson Currie

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Design & Development Director Danny Castro, Public Works Director/City Engineer Bryan McKinney, Planning Manager Cheri L. Flores, Senior Planner Carlos Flores, Associate Planner Siji Fernandez, Commission Secretary Tania Flores, and City Attorney Bill Ihrke

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Tyerman led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA – None.

CONFIRMATION OF AGENDA

Commissioner Nieto said he would recuse himself from the discussion and vote on Public Hearing Item No. 1 due to a potential conflict of interest stemming from a business relationship, as his employer, The Altum Group, is a consultant on the proposed project.

MOTION – A motion was made and seconded by Commissioners Hassett/Caldwell to confirm the agenda as published. Motion passed unanimously.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, PRESENTATIONS, AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION – None.

CONSENT CALENDAR

1. APPROVE MEETING MINUTES DATED FEBRUARY 28, 2023

MOTION – A motion was made and seconded by Commissioners Caldwell/Nieto to approve the Consent Calendar as recommended. Motion passed unanimously.

BUSINESS SESSION – None.

STUDY SESSION

1. DISCUSS CITYWIDE HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY

Senior Planner Flores presented the staff report which is on file in the Design and Development Department.

Wendy Tinsley Becker, Principal of Urbana Preservation and Planning, provided a summary of the process and findings of the Historic Resources Survey including project goals and milestones; meetings and feedback with various interested parties; historic-era tracts and neighborhoods including geographical information system (GIS) mapping for current and future planning purposes; status of previously recorded properties and newly identified age eligible properties; selection process for recommendations, survey report, and context for which properties can be identified; future recommendations for identifying historic resources.

Commission comments included appreciation for the work done, concerns about historic properties that have been demolished and loss of historic resources, questions to staff regarding new processes that might prevent destruction or renovation of historic properties, questions to staff regarding future actions to be made with these findings, possible code text amendments recommended.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Linda Williams, President of La Quinta Historical Society and La Quinta resident – expressed appreciation for Urbana’s cooperation and extensive work on this project; commended the City on being ahead of most cities in the Coachella Valley on research and identification of historic resources, informed the Commission of the historic plaque project to assist in identification and education about historic resources throughout La Quinta, requested additional information regarding the property located at 53965 Avenida Obregon (Walter White House) and provided additional information regarding the architectural significance of its design.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

- 1. CONSIDER ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS RECOMMENDING CITY COUNCIL ADOPT A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION (EA 2022-0001) AND APPROVE GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT 2022-0002, ZONE CHANGE 2022-0002, SPECIFIC PLAN 2022-0001, AND SITE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT 2022-0001 FOR A 284 UNIT APARTMENT PROJECT; CEQA: DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT PREPARED A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION (EA 2022-0001) CONSISTENT WITH THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT; LOCATION: NORTHEAST CORNER OF WASHINGTON STREET AND AVENUE 50**

COMMISSIONER NIETO RECUSED HIMSELF FROM DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON PUBLIC HEARING ITEM NO. 1, DUE TO A POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST STEMMING FROM A BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP, AS THE ALTUM GROUP, A CONSULTANT FOR THE PROPOSED PROJECT, IS HIS EMPLOYER; AND LEFT THE DIAS AT 5:40 P.M.

DECLARATIONS REGARDING COMMISSION PUBLIC CONTACT – None.

Senior Planner Flores presented the staff report which is on file in the Design and Development Department.

Staff answered Commission questions regarding changes to the traffic patterns, property ingress and egress, deceleration lanes, bus shelter relocation, and traffic study including date of completion and opportunity for an updated study; pedestrian and bicycle safety due to proximity to school and youth facilities; changes to the Housing Element and General Plan, current land use designation and land use designations of surrounding communities, and City and community benefits of approving the changes as proposed; income thresholds for affordable housing and population for each income category; addition and assignment of low-income housing obligations for Site 6 due to “no net loss” provisions, property owner notification process, and State Housing and Community Development (HCD) approval process; reduction in required parking with affordable housing bonus, overflow parking availability, and Electric Vehicle (EV) parking requirements; Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) storm channel property, setbacks of this property, future Avenue 50 storm water bridge status, ability to add landscape improvements on CVWD property; Avenue 50 roadway safety and landscape improvements; visual impacts of the proposed building height, surrounding community building height, and affordable housing unit density bonus requirements; unit size reduction from Municipal Code standards and comparable projects within the City; and dust control mitigation measures during construction.

CHAIRPERSON CURRIE DECLARED THE PUBLIC HEARING OPEN AT 6:54 P.M.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Applicant, Sherry Braun, Director of Design for Irwin Partners Architects, introduced herself and Greg Irwin, Partner and Principal of Irwin Partners Architects, and provided a brief overview of the project including a short video with proposed renderings; information on the previously approved project; proposed roadway and sidewalk improvements including bus stop shelter relocation and deceleration lane on Washington Street; Imperial Irrigation District (IID) substation upgrade and project use of solar and condensers to alleviate electrical grid strains; locations of garage and carports, recreational facilities and open space areas; line of site for buildings and garages/carports with visual renderings; property and equipment screen efforts and use of desert landscape; location and orientation of buildings, patios, and balconies; in-unit amenities; and environmental and traffic studies performed.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Benjamin Egan of Egan Engineering, Civil Engineer on the project, provided additional information regarding the CVWD property; cited City and community

benefits of the project including the importance and necessity of the IID Marshal Station upgrades considering future development needs, state EV mandates, and the already straining electrical grid.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: George Ghossain, Principal Engineer at Integrated Engineering Group, who conducted the traffic study for the project, introduced himself and provided additional information on the current traffic study including trip generation, intersection analysis, study area, roadway classifications and improvements, increased traffic and school zones traffic management through signal timing, and General Plan and roadway buildout for this project and future development.

Applicants answered Commission questions regarding timing of traffic study and its viability for current traffic conditions and future capacity; special event, in-season, peak hours and other traffic generators and possible queuing back up at entry; pedestrian traffic safety; setbacks and line of sight visualizations with two-story and three-story buildings including views from apartment patio/balcony and garages on north side of the project; application of market rate units towards the City's Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) requirements; neighborhood/community meetings and public outreach; perimeter block wall versus previously proposed wrought iron fencing; parking requirements and overflow parking; onsite leasing and site management; and zoning and building height and possibility of reducing three-story buildings to two-story including unit loss and cost reductions.

CHAIRPERSON CURRIE CALLED FOR A BRIEF RECESS AT 7:59 P.M.

CHAIRPERSON CURRIE RECONVENED THE MEETING AT 8:11 P.M. WITH PLANNING COMMISSIONERS CALDWELL, GUERRERO, HASSETT, McCUNE, AND TYERMAN PRESENT; COMMISSIONER NIETO LEFT THE MEETING AT 8:11 P.M.

Applicant Benjamin Egan provided a correction to previous statements regarding zoning and building heights.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Ana Esquivel, La Quinta – opposed the project due to traffic and outdated environmental report and traffic study; the re-allocation of low-income housing obligations to Site 6 and lack of environmental impact at that site; negative visual impacts due to increased height limit; and requested property zoning history.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Kristen Dolan, La Quinta (*received donated time from Casey Dolan*) – opposed the project due to outdated traffic study; inconsistent architecture and design to surrounding communities; lack of contingency plan for overflow parking; and requested increased community outreach and story poles to provide better understanding of visual impacts of increased building heights.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Brian Thomas, La Quinta (*received donated time from James Tufo*) – opposed the project due to increased traffic and outdated traffic study; inconsistent

architecture and design with surrounding community; and negative visual impacts due to building height.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Lawrence Van Pelt, President of Duna La Quinta Homeowners Association and La Quinta resident – opposed the project and provided overview of analysis performed by an outside licensed traffic engineer not associated with the project or applicant which includes building size, scale and height inconsistency, image corridor standards, outdated and restrictive traffic data, and pedestrian and bicycle safety.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Brian Flath, La Quinta – opposed the project due building height and design; lack of undergrounding current power lines or construction of a privacy wall at the north side; increased lighting and light pollution; traffic and safety concerns at Washington Street and Sagebrush Drive intersection.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Richard Gray, La Quinta – opposed the project due to increased density and inconsistency with surrounding community; and apartments promoting transient occupancy rather than long term residency.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Deborah Applebaum, La Quinta – opposed to the project due to traffic congestion, carbon emissions, and noise pollution.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: George Christopher, IID Energy Consumer Advisory Committee Community Liaison and La Quinta resident – expressed support of the project due to proposed upgrades to the IID Marshall Substation providing the surrounding community with power on a strained electrical grid; and consistent zoning for multifamily residential communities.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Bill Walker, La Quinta – opposed the project due to negative visual impacts of building height; increased congestion and crime due to type of project proposed; and devaluation of surrounding property if approved.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Dante Gomez, La Quinta – opposed the project and cited lack of noticing and transparency during community and public outreach.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Rocio Gomez, La Quinta – opposed the project due to child safety with increased traffic and school overcrowding.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Kimberly White, La Quinta – opposed the project due to inconsistency with surrounding area and negative visual impacts of building architecture and design.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Kevin White, La Quinta – opposed the project due to increased traffic and congestion, building height, and project design.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Audrey Reed, La Quinta – opposed the project due to negative visual impacts, increased crime, and negative traffic pattern changes.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Juan Carlos Sanchez, La Quinta – opposed the project due to increased traffic; lack of parking and overflow parking contingency plan; lack of parking at youth facility and softball fields in close proximity to the project.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Denise Colak, La Quinta – opposed the project due to traffic, safety; lack of available public and emergency services; congestion during special events and festival season causing traffic blocking emergency services.

CHAIRPERSON CURRIE DECLARED THE PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED AT 9:10 P.M.

Commission discussion followed regarding traffic concerns and outdated traffic study; proposed building height and negative visual impacts; lack of parking and parking overflow contingency plans; pedestrian and bicycle traffic safety; lack of noticing of community outreach and focus group meetings held by Applicant; increased unit counts and the addition and need of housing opportunities within the City; garage/carport locations and line of sight impacts; importance of upgrading of the IID Marshal Substation to provide electricity to the community; roadway improvement timeline; ability to use story poles to provide better understanding of visual impacts; architecture and design inconsistency with surrounding areas; community right to views, community values, and quality of life for residents.

Staff provided direction to the Commission on possible next steps should the applicant be willing to make changes as recommended in Commission discussions.

CHAIRPERSON CURRIE RE-OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 9:27 P.M.

Mr. Irwin expressed willingness to amend the plans per Commission discussion and requested additional directive on project aspects that would need consideration; Staff and City Attorney Ihrke provided additional next step options including continuing the public hearing to: 1) consider denial of the project as currently proposed, or 2) provide the applicant additional time to amend the current proposal; and Applicants requested brief recess to confer.

CHAIRPERSON CURRIE CALLED FOR A BRIEF RECESS AT 9:39 P.M.

CHAIRPERSON CURRIE RECONVENED THE MEETING AT 9:44 P.M. WITH PLANNING COMMISSIONERS CALDWELL, GUERRERO, HASSETT, McCUNE, AND TYERMAN PRESENT

Applicant, Staff and Commission discussed options for moving forward with a continuance and necessary changes for additional consideration including minimum number of three-story buildings that would be considered on the site, if any; Applicant requested a continuance and agreed to work with Staff to reconfigure the project per Commission directives including changes to architecture, building height, additional traffic study or traffic counts, and specified roadway improvements.

MOTION – A motion was made and seconded by Commissioners Guerrero/Hassett to continue the Public Hearing regarding this item to date certain of June 27, 2023.
Motion passed: ayes – 6, noes – 0, abstain – 0, absent – 1 (Nieto).

STAFF ITEMS – None.

COMMISSIONER ITEMS – None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made and seconded by Commissioners Hassett/Guerrero to adjourn the meeting at 9:59 p.m. Motion passed: ayes – 6, noes – 0, abstain – 0, absent – 1 (Nieto).

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. Flores', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

TANIA FLORES, Commission Secretary
City of La Quinta, California