

Valley Center Design Review Board

Approved Minutes: March 2, 2015

DRB Members Present: Montgomery, Moore, Robertson.

Visitors: Ann Quinley, Jon Vick, Lorelee Stephens, Richard Stephens, Matt Kohlenberger, Jim Chagala, Chris Peto, Tom Lenny, LaVonne3 Norwood, Kerry Garza, Steve Hutchison, Mike Mahan, Mindy Fogg, Dennis Campbell, Deb Hoffler

MINUTES: February 18, 2015 were approved with additions 3-0.

OPEN FORUM: There were no speakers for Open Forum.

PROJECTS:

North Village Commercial Area: Site and Landscape Plans:

Jim Chagala, Representative for Developer, Matt Kohlenberger, Landscape Architect, CDPC 9 Conceptual Design and Planning, Presenters.

The chair opened the meeting by asking Jim Chagala what he was looking for from the Design Review Board today. He requested stamped approval on the project in order to move forward. He was willing to make minor changes and his preference is that this is our last meeting during this phase of the project.

She then provided some background on this project, referring to a letter of about a year ago which is attached to these Minutes that lays out the background in more detail. We have been reviewing this project for 13 years. In 2009 we saw a plan that DRB and the VC Planning Group supported. At that time the County Department of Planning and Land Use was working with the VC Community on the General Plan Update. Based on the developer's Specific Plan for the North Village, residential densities on these properties were increased to accommodate the compact Village commercial and residential plan that Weston Development was submitting. In 2011, the new General Plan (and with it the new Valley Center Community Plan) were adopted by the Board of Supervisors. At this point the developer was granted "by-right" the increased densities that were negotiated during the GPU process which were, again, based on the Specific Plan for the combined commercial and residential properties.

After the new General Plan was approved (August 2011), Weston Communities brought forward a new proposal to develop only the commercial portion of the previous Specific Plan. The site plan for this new proposal is very different from the 2009 proposal which the DRB and the Valley Center Community Planning Group had endorsed so enthusiastically. For one thing, it is no longer possible to see the whole project. For another, the commercial project by itself is no longer the pedestrian-friendly "Main Street" that our Design Guidelines require. The current design has been driven by corporate program requirements, in this case, the developer says, of Stater Brothers grocery and CVS pharmacy. The Design Review Board has been working with the developer to come up with a site design that meets both the corporate anchors and the community design objectives somewhere in the middle.

It now seems that neither Stater Brothers or CVS are interested in coming to Valley Center. The developer says that anchor tenants are likely to be a smaller grocery, perhaps a 21,000 SF. Further the advancement on the part of Rite-Aid of a proposal for the development of the SE corner of the Cole Grade-Valley Center Road intersection also brings uncertainty to the possibility of a drug store tenant.

So the site plan before us is in many ways a "placeholder." The grocery store on the site plan is 41,000 square feet with congruent parking. If the grocery anchor would be a smaller footprint, 21,000 sq. ft., the parking could be reduced. Jim Chagala said no matter what size they showed on the plan, if the anchor changed they would have to repeat this review process for approval of a size change.

The DRB has also been uncomfortable about reviewing the commercial area without understanding how the residential areas will be incorporated into a whole Village. The "shopping center" has its back turned

to the norther residential areas. Living behind a conventional shopping center is much different than being part of a whole village which we endorsed previously. There was also a large central park that ran diagonally through the Village area, which is actually a drainage, that maintained the mature oaks and was to include additional native trees and shrubs which is no longer part of the plan. This project is becoming what we *don't want* to represent our town.

As for phasing, the developer says that the anchor stores will be built first; then the pad drive-through stores along Valley Center Road. The small stores that create the "Main Street" the community desires most would be built last "as market conditions" allow. The DRB has also been disappointed that the Village Green is part of the *final phase*.

The chair asked Mindy Fogg and Dennis Campbell of San Diego County PDS to explain where the project was in the County review. Dennis said that there had been many meetings with both the applicant and the community about what was wanted. The last one being last December. Mindy Fogg said she came away from the December meeting confused, thinking there would be an additional meeting to work out the details and how to implement them. There were staff comments submitted in March of last year along with the comments from the Community. Some of the concerns at that time were the number of traffic signals on Valley Center Road, additional turn lanes, median removals and traffic merging. We requested that the pedestrian access be increased and the whole center be more pedestrian friendly. The County is waiting for the Environmental, Drainage, Storm Water Runoff, agriculture reports to be submitted.

With this preamble, the chair turned the meeting over to Jim Chagala and Matt Kohlenberger. The landscape architect was present to specifically address how the revised plan resolves the issues with the site and landscape plans that the DRB had cited in our last review: that the next iteration of the Site/Landscape plan show pedestrian walk-ways, a stronger tree-scape with a variety of trees clustered in larger areas, more landscaping and other pedestrian amenities.

Matt began showing the site plan and the layout of the buildings, and to our surprise, the DRB had not received from the developer the most recent edition of the site plan, or the landscape plan. We were sent the 9/22/14 plans which we had previously reviewed along with the landscape concept plan. Since that review, evidently, the developer has made changes to the site plan which the DRB has not seen until today. Apparently the County had the correct plans, however, when the applicant emailed the plans to the DRB, they were not the updated plan. A question arose why the DRB was receiving plans from anyone other than the county.

Matt walked us through the Landscape Plan, describing how he had picked trees to define different areas, and to repeat the same tree in order for the design to flow. He also explained how the bio-swales work, and how they can be used as a landscape feature in some of the planted areas while filtering the runoff water. He is planning for overhead irrigation instead of drip, and the bio swales will be irrigated. It is required to use reclaimed water on the landscaping if it is available.

The trees in the grocery store parking lot were to be Koelreuteria which top out at 30-40'. He is planning for them to grow to that height and provide a full canopy. Susan Moore questioned the size of the parking lot planters and Matt explained they specified 6'x9' planters and that would provide adequate root room for these trees. Moore disagreed. She also stated that there were not enough trees in the parking lot to create any shade. She suggested planting strips instead of square planters.

The landscaping around the Drug store was questioned, if it was screening the building. Matt stated he is 'softening' the view while offering a view of the store, which is what the store owners and people trying to find the store want. Lael stated that they would prefer clustering of trees in a more natural design along the perimeter, instead of lined up in a row. He also stated that the majority of the trees were at the far side of the parking lot from the grocery entrance. This was also questioned because most everyone wants to park as close to the entrance and exit as possible, so that was where the shade should be.

Matt reviewed the circulation plan. DRB members said merely added green lines to sidewalks but did not improve the pedestrian qualities of the site plan. the internal circulation is all straight sidewalks next to parking lots, no DG paths or any other walkable elements that is planned. This is not a walkable center.

Keith Robertson stated that this development appeared to be designed primarily as a huge parking lot, with the buildings secondarily carved out of the asphalt when the design should begin with the Vision of buildings and pedestrian movement, and the parking should then be arranged around the place.

Deb Hofler stated that she thought the developer was missing huge opportunities. She said that the community has been telling him we want an upscale, smaller market that will fit the demographics of Valley Center. We were hoping to have this with Lilac Foods, and it has been a huge disappointment, and does not fit our needs. The people of Valley Center want a town center and they are not getting it. This plan with a town center in the middle of the drive of 4 small buildings is not what we have in mind. It is unreasonable to think there can be a town center where all the cars are traveling. Her thoughts are if the market and center are not what we want, people will continue to go down to Escondido to get what they are looking for. Jim Chagala stated that Herb had to develop something that would make money, and may not be able to provide everything the community wants. There were several comments from others to the effect of ‘ if you can’t build what we want, then we don’t want it built at all’

Chris Peto, who represents Halferty cconstruction, the endorsed developerfor Rite Aid,wanted to make sure that everyone knew that Rite Aid, which was shown on the 9/22/14 plans was not a part of the Weston Communities project.He said that Rite Aid extremely upset that their logo appeared on Weston’s plans. Chris stated that they were working on an approved project at a different site in Valley Center. Jim Chagala apologized and explained that the project architect had on his own added that logo to the elevation drawings and that Jim did not know why. Jim said that Weston did not have a commitment from either CVS, Stater Brothers or RiteAid for this site.

The DRB decided, with agreement from the County PDS representatives, that it would be premature to take any further action on the Weston commercial project. The DRB will await County PDS review and the submission of the correct plans before taking any action. Please refer to the documents below that have been sent in the past about this project.

The meeting was adjourned at _____.

Valley Center Design Review Board

February 21, 2014 draft

February 25, 2014 approved by DRB Members with revisions for clarity

TO: Dennis Campbell, San Diego County Planning and Development Services

RE: Report of February 20, 2014 Design Review of the North Village Commercial Project

The Situation and Our Approach

The Valley Center Design Review Board held a special meeting on February 20, 2014 to preview, before submission to the County, revisions to the architectural design of six buildings, and also to further discuss the site plan which was submitted to the County in late December. DRB members agreed to prepare a formal statement that details our appreciation for Mr. Schaffer's efforts, our position generally and our conditional endorsement of the work that has been presented. This is a complicated project with a long

history. We apologize for our lengthy comments, but we cannot adequately represent detailed discussion and comments that must take place at this early in the process merely with a short motion. Whenever we reduce our written comments, it is as though lengthy discussion has never taken place.

The Design Review Board, in December, endorsed the site plan concept. That said (and done) we must all also acknowledge that the current site design proposal varies considerably from the pedestrian-centered Town Center the community endorsed several years ago. This is simply a fact that the developer, the architects, and the DRB all recognize: the current site design is more conventional shopping center than traditional town center. The design is driven by and organized around the automobile.

To clarify, a “conventional shopping center” and “automobile centric” design means that the buildings are isolated from one another and surrounded by requisite “exclusive” parking spaces. They are connected by roads, and the distances between buildings are scaled for automobiles; distances are great enough that people will be tempted to drive, not walk, from one side of the shopping center to the other. The design is more similar to the shopping center at 4-S Ranch, for example, than the main drag through Rancho Santa Fe. To contrast, a “town center” design would be designed to encourage pedestrian traffic. Distances between buildings would be shorter, more human in scale; parking would be centralized and shared; there would be a network of attractive walkways connecting buildings at the shortest distances. The two models are simply different systems of design and we should waste no time arguing about these facts.

This said, Mr. Schaffer has said, *and we have believed him*, that he simply cannot “sell” to anchor tenants the traditional pedestrian-centered “heart of town” that Valley Center has long envisioned. This fact leads to another: the North Village developers, Herb Schaffer and Napoleon Zervas/Jerry Gaughan, are essential contributors to the South Village sewer expansion. Thus, development of the entire central valley village depends to large extent on attracting commitments of anchor tenants to the North Village.

So, we five people who are representing the Valley Center community have choices. We could stick to the original vision which, we have been persuaded, will detrimentally discourage Stater Brothers’ commitment to Mr. Schaffer and thus the development of the North Village. Or, we could also try to work with the facts the developer has presented to create a design that attempts to please both automobile and pedestrian worlds so that the North Village will be MORE than a conventional shopping center. The latter is the approach that we have taken, for the purpose we have articulated here. The recommendation below is based on this reasoning.

Recommendations:

These recommendations were discussed at length at our meeting with the developer and the consultants.

Architectural Elevations

1. Endorse supermarket, drug store, office building and retails shops 2, 3 and 4.

The developer and the project architects, Angeleno Architects and R.E.D. have truly gone the extra mile in the design of Stater Brothers Supermarket, CVS drug store, retail shops 2, 3, and 4, and the office building. DRB members are unanimous in our endorsement of the new architectural elevations for these buildings.

2. Re-design west segment of the inline stores.

The developer agreed that the west segment of this wing will be re-designed in the “California Ranch” style of Shop 2.

Site Plan

Our discussion was lengthy, and the developer agreed to look again at the site plan for opportunities to improve the pedestrian experience through the following:

- 1. Strengthen pedestrian connectivity.** Improve cross-parking lot linkages between buildings through strategic placement of a network of pavement treatments, landscaped islands, clusters of trees, arboles and pergolas and other visual elements. Shortest distance pathways.
- 2. Strengthen the tree program.** Provide a better growing environment for a mix of shade trees by clustering parking lot and street trees in larger planters (instead of lining them up in a row of small planters), using structural soil and permeable pavements. Aim for a bit less geometry and more organic forms.
- 3. Strengthen the landscaping program.** Look for opportunities to connect green spaces visually, and functionally.

Thank you, Herb, Rick, David and Jim,

Valley Center Design Review Board

March 29, 2014

Dear Dennis,

After a great deal of thought, I am writing to say that I think the next DRB review of Weston's Site Plan for the commercial piece of the North Village should not take place on April 7th as we thought it might. Too many elements of the plan that are significant to the community are still in flux. Before the DRB conducts yet another review of this project, and is asked for another endorsement, let's allow the developer the time to complete these details and let's also better understand how County DPW "conditions" and sewer facility planning will impact the project and the community Vision.

Details of my thinking:

1. As I prepare the DRB April 7th agenda, I have been reviewing DRB comments and other correspondence pertaining to the North Village Site Plan and the revised elevations that we discussed in the DRB meeting on February 20th. (Attached, February 25 Special Statement for the County; March 1, Draft Minutes for February 20th, and March 17, e-letter in response to your request for a private meeting). The attachments detail our request that the next iteration of the Site/Landscape plan show pedestrian walk-ways, a stronger tree-scape with a variety of

trees clustered in larger areas, more landscaping and other pedestrian amenities (see attachments for details).

We are anticipating the developer's full cooperation in making these relatively minor "tweaks" to improve the pedestrian experience and help remedy the project's over-emphasis on moving and parking automobiles. These requests are strongly supported by the Design Guidelines for the "Town Center" which has long been planned for this part of town, and are more than fair, particularly in return for the community's very considerable compromises and the circumstances which I review below.

It sounds to me that the County Scoping letter also supports these modifications. Even so, these will take place in the context of other considerations, and there is no point in approving enhancements in this iteration that will disappear in the next as a result of who knows what.

2. We have also been digesting the County Scoping letter, released three weeks ago, March 6th. As I understand the County letter we can anticipate, at least: a phasing plan; some additional tweaks to the site plan, and sewer treatment details which will presumably include the location(s) of any required facility -- of major significance to the overall Village plan. Further, I also understand informally from Jim Chagala that architectural elevations for the pad structures will be submitted with this application, after all, because the Design Review Board cannot approve elevations we have never seen.
3. For the next review the DRB needs to receive -- in advance -- whatever plans and documents will be discussed. Plans for a complex project cannot reasonably be presented, absorbed, discussed and endorsed in a two-hour meeting. We have requested advance copies for all of our meetings of the last several months *but have not received them*. At each meeting we have had to review plans that we are seeing for the first time.
4. We have operated for many months now outside the County's formal review system, and, on our part, in complete good faith. This informality quickens the process and reduces processing costs for the developer because it avoids formal resubmissions and staff oversight. Too, it gives the community a chance to share our concerns before large investments have been made in design and engineering and ideas are more fluid.

Though the Site Plan and architectural elevations have been improved since November, it also seems that by focusing on these things and not others that with each turn another piece of the "town center" idea has slipped through the cracks. The downside of working outside the formal process is the tendency of volunteers who have not seen plans in advance -- to endorse now and think later. I fear now that we have perhaps been overly-responsive to the developer's need to hurry-through review of what is no longer the Master-Planned North Village we endorsed in 2009.

Of course, we DO encourage developers to work with the DRB before filing an application. Clearly, however, the benefit of working inside the County's formal review system is that the developer submits materials to the County, we receive them in advance directly from the County and we all review the same material at the same time. This more formal process lessens the chances of different recollections, or of pieces being dropped between iterations.

5. In order to appreciate the community's expectations for this project and most importantly how our requests at this point pale in comparison to the enormous compromises that our endorsement of this Site Plan represents -- it's necessary to know and understand its history.

We must begin at the beginning:

First of all, Valley Center's Vision, described in our Design Guidelines and referenced in our Community Plan, for nearly 40 years have described the future development of this area of town as a traditional Town Center -- not a conventional shopping center.

Second, during the General Plan Update process, in an effort to achieve the community's Vision, the Valley Center community agreed to UPZONE several hundred acres of Village residential property owned by these developers – in return for their agreement to develop this property as a "Main Street" style "California Farm Village" with development to be guided by a North Village Specific Plan. This public action greatly enriched the value of this private property. The Specific Plan was developed with the County's guidance through a series of public community meetings. All parties to this agreement (the developers, the County, and the community) understood that the North Village Master Plan would be incorporated into Valley Center's Community Plan.

6. The General Plan Update codified the "up-zone" but failed to incorporate the Specific Plan. The failure to codify the whole agreement, as promised, turned a fair exchange into a one-sided blockbuster win for the developers.
7. For the community, though, it was an enormous bait and switch. Only recently and in little bitty doses have the profound implications of this situation been revealed to us.
 - a. First, we learned from the developer that he is right now developing ONLY the commercial piece of a larger parcel that also includes greatly-intensified residential zoning. There is no Specific Plan to ensure integrated planning even of this parcel, let alone of the developer's additional residential parcels. Even though the developer says he "plans" to create a Specific Plan for the residential parcels, there is nothing in place to ensure this.
 - b. We are learning only now that the developer is entitled "by right" (of the new General Plan designations) to sell or develop all of these properties -- in the very "pieces" that CEQA prohibits.
 - c. Finally, we are learning now that our good faith efforts to provide attractive incentives for our developer friends to build our Village have ironically also helped eliminate CEQA protections that could help us now to enforce the integrated planning we intended.
8. No surprise, our trust has been eroded. The reward for our cooperation in hurrying the process has been more whittling away of parts of the project that matter deeply to the community. Each new iteration of this Site Plan erases another essential piece. More and more it seems that what's left is exactly the conventional automobile-centric shopping center the developer proposed eleven years ago, and less and less of the California Farm Village we worked so hard to create.
9. Examples from just the last few months:

- a. We all know that a central Village "green" gathering place has always been of central importance to the community. The Site Plan the DRB "endorsed" in November included a Village Green that was split into two parts. We protested about the size of the green (too small for community gatherings) AND about its non-central location. The developer argued that this arrangement allowed the "Live Work" units to "bridge" to the residential neighborhoods. We bought the argument and endorsed the plan, perhaps against our better judgment. BUT, we trusted these people.
- b. AFTER our endorsement, the next iteration eliminated the northern section of the "Village Green" (cutting the size by nearly two-thirds) AND also eliminated the "Live-Work" units. (Should we now withdraw our endorsement?)
- c. After months of working on the architectural elevations for the retail buildings that create the only pedestrian element that remains in this Site Plan – the "four corners" – we learned in a North Village Subcommittee meeting in late February for the first time that the developer's "phasing plan" was to build this element at the very last, when "market demand" allows. We all know that Valley Center contains about 200% MORE commercial zoning than the community can support. So the only "town center" element that remains in the plan may never be built. Again, what is the meaning of our endorsement? What exactly did we endorse: Phase 1; Phase 2 and Phase Maybe?
- d. We learned only a few weeks ago that DPW conditioning of this project, without community intervention, will likely include the removal of Valley Center's pride and joy – our already-meager planted median in the North Village AND the Vision-busting additions of more asphalt for left turns and accelerating into speeding traffic, AND four stoplights between Miller and Cole Grade Road. These pieces of discouraging news were released inadvertently by DPW staff who were visiting the community subcommittee meeting.
- e. We are also just now learning that our enthusiastic endorsement of the Butterfield Trails Site Plan was without full knowledge that the project's conditioning at the final hour included the ripping out of the South Village median. We do not want to repeat this heartbreaking mistake.
- f. We are just beginning to realize, too, that the sewer plant details for this project are still fluid. The treatment facility expansion is another "engineering" project with the potential to paste a truly ugly walled industrial complex in the middle of -- who knows? All of these things matter deeply to us.
- g. As volunteers who are representing the community's interests it really is incumbent upon us to know the details of plans we are endorsing. Isn't it?

All this is to say, Dennis, that continuing our solicitous cooperation with the developer's hurry-up schedule all of a sudden seems to be presenting the potential for undermining (out of ignorance) what's left of the community's Vision.

I review this history not to suggest anything other than our desire, as we move forward, to be perfectly clear about what we are endorsing. Unfortunately I'm lacking in suggestions at this point, other than waiting until the Site Plan revisions have all been completed and "conditioning" is clear before we review the project again. This way we will all understand the same Site Plan, and we will all see what revisions have been incorporated and whether the developer and his consultants are choosing to respect the Design Guidelines we cite, or not.

I imagine this will be disappointing to Weston. Herb is understandably in a big hurry to get this project approved. It seems, though, that holding this meeting after the revisions we all expect are incorporated will actually save time (and consultant billing hours!) in the long run.

Very Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lael Montgomery". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lael Montgomery
VC Design Review Board Chair