

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE
HELD JUNE 20, 2006**

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Davitt called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL:

Present were Commissioners Gelhaar, Hill and Mehranian, Deputy City Attorney Cobey, Director of Community Development Stanley, Consulting Architect/Planner Cantrell, Planner Gjolme and Marianne Tanzer, EIP Associates. Commissioner Cahill was expected to arrive shortly.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Gelhaar led the salute to the flag.

IV. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

Comments were not offered.

V. REORDERING OF THE AGENDA:

Chairman Davitt advised that the agenda would not change.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR:

A. The minutes of June 13, 2006 were tabled.

VII. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Tentative Parcel Map 066491, Conditional Use Permit 403, Zone Change 06-01, Tree Removal 06-16; La Cañada Properties/Mattix Development Partners; northeast corner of Foothill Boulevard and Angeles Crest Highway:

Chairman Davitt advised the audience that the purpose of the meeting was primarily to accept public comments on the Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration document and secondly, on the project itself. He provided the protocol for the meeting and advised that public comments would be accepted after the applicant's presentation.

Director Stanley related that he would present an overview of the project and the various requested entitlements and then refer the presentation to Roger Cantrell, contract architect/planner, who would present specifics of the project. Lastly, the environmental consultant, EIP, would review the environmental process.

The overall area of 11.3 acres was displayed on PowerPoint. The project area comprises 10.1 acres at the northeast corner of Foothill Boulevard and Angeles Crest Highway. It is located within the Downtown Village Specific Plan zone and adjoins the 1.2-acre site that accommodates the Sport Chalet corporate offices.

Environmental Review - The Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (DMND), which is under concurrent review, determined the project would not result in significant environmental effects. The thirty-day period for the public to submit comments on the DMND began June 9 and will end on July 10, 2006. Copies of the DMNC have been available for review at the City offices since June 9th.

Conditional Use Permit 403 - is required for projects located within the Downtown Village Specific Plan that are greater than 10,000-sf, for the proposed real estate office use, to allow alcohol beverage sales at the proposed restaurants and the determination by the Director for parking adequacy.

Tentative Parcel Map 066491 - is a request to re-subdivide 50 parcels, including 3 dedicated streets (Craig, Marvin and Houseman), a portion of the Lillian Court parkway, and 1 dedicated alley, into 6 commercial parcels and two dedicated streets. The new parcels would range in size from .75 acres to 2.3 acres. Through this process, the City will decline the offer of dedication on Beulah.

Zone Change 06-01 - proposes to modify certain provisions of the Downtown Village Specific Plan: maximum building height, the park's location, elimination of Marvin Street (which would otherwise be a connector road from Foothill to the North Road) and relocate the existing Beulah Drive connector road to the west.

Tree Removal 06-16 - would allow removal of approximately 247 of the 281 trees on site; 34 of the existing trees would be maintained or relocated on site.

Context - Director Stanley advised that the project had been extensively reviewed through 2 preliminary and 6 formal Design Commission meetings held between March and May. The Design Commission's resolution with its 29 conditions was attached to the staff report.

Additionally, the City Council formed an ad hoc committee to narrow the project's scope and address problems early on. The Committee included 2 members of the City Council, 2 from the Planning Commission, 2 from the Design Commission and various staff and consultants.

Director Stanley then described the request to convert residential, office and commercial uses into a comprehensive commercial office/village style complex, including a public park. All existing structures would be demolished, with the exception of the Sport Chalet office building (26,972-sf) and Taylor's restaurant (5,585sf) and the Montessori school. Total square footage - existing and proposed is 143,757-sf.

Vehicular access - the project would provide an east/west public street (the North Road) and a public park, per the DVSP. Director Stanley advised that the original thought to have the North Road access the project north of the Shell Station was thwarted by Caltrans, who rejected 12 alternatives. The City expended more than \$50,000, but was unable to satisfy Caltrans requirements and concerns. Consequently, the North Road is located below the Shell Station.

Commissioner Cahill arrived at this point.

Director Stanley pointed out that while the DVSP included illustrations of the North Road alignment, it was not with such specificity or inflexibility that modifying the alignment would require a code amendment. Staff concluded that the project meets the intent of the Specific Plan in that regard. The 72-ft-wide North Road includes traffic lanes in each direction, bus stops, bulb outs, a center median, 2 bike lanes and landscaping as stipulated in the DVSP. The North Road's width is slightly greater near the park to provide angle parking and then narrows when it reaches the Shell Station. In an effort to increase pedestrian activity along the North Road, the Design Commission desired to maximize sidewalks and maximize landscaping to screen the parking structure. They also eliminated the eastbound bus stop and street parking on the North Road, unless the Traffic Engineer determines its necessity. Vehicular access is comprised of one east/west road from Angeles Crest Highway and one north/south from Foothill, approximately 130 ft west of the Beulah extension. The Specific Plan identified Marvin and the Beulah extension as connector roads from Foothill; however, the ad hoc committee unanimously concluded it would be best to have a single connector road from Foothill.

Circulation -A traffic circle would provide interim termination of the north Road along the east end of the site. Director Stanley noted that the Specific Plan calls for the North Road to continue eastward to the Vons Center and possibly to Rinetti Lane. From the Circle, a private drive would extend to the north, providing further access to the park and for the Sport Chalet office building. The offsite effects of the North Road entry south of the Shell station (rather than the planned access near the freeway), would be managed through reconfiguration of the Foothill/Angeles Crest/Chevy Chase intersection. Signal modifications are also part of the mitigation of increased traffic levels, as addressed in the Draft MND.

Park - The DVSP is very specific with regard to creation of 2 parks, and their location and size, and further states that the Park District location and size are flexible. Therefore, an amendment to the DVSP is not required. The applicant provided a park of the stipulated dimensions and at more than 35,000-sf, it exceeds the stipulated size, but relocated it away from Foothill to the north side of the North Road. As proposed, the park would have high visibility from Foothill and would provide a buffer and access for residents to the east. Staff believes the relocation meets the intent of the Specific Plan as it would activate the North Road while maintaining high visibility and a preserved commercial streetwall along Foothill Boulevard.

This concluded Director Stanley's remarks. He then introduced Roger Cantrell, Consultant Architect/Planner.

Buildings and Parking

Mr. Cantrell reported, that 111,000-sf of new retail floor area added to Taylor's Restaurant and the Sport Chalet office building comprise a total floor area of 143,757-sf. A parking count of 540 spaces is less than current code, but compliant with the Specific Plan's requirement, which is based on a parking district being established. Parking is distributed throughout the site in a compact manner, and includes a semi-subterranean structure and rooftop parking atop Building 'A'. The majority of parking is provided between 'A' and the Sport Chalet office building and the buildings fronting Foothill.

The primary tenant building 'A', would be built at the highest portion of the site, in the northwest corner, near the Sport Chalet office building, separated by a loading dock and a small parking lot. At 45,000-sf, 'A' would comply with the floor area limit allowed by the Specific Plan. Buildings fronting Foothill would screen on site parking per the Specific Plan, and wrap around the corner to the short Angeles Crest frontage.

Pedestrian Access and Linkages

When the access road on Foothill was shifted and one access road created, the result was a 500-ft-long block. The applicant responded by providing paseos between the buildings, which allow pedestrian access and views into the site and three-dimensional views of the buildings while maintaining a streetwall along Foothill. The Design Commission carefully considered the design effects of the paseos, including views of surface parking between the buildings. Detailed conditions assure that such issues would not be overlooked when the project receives final Design Commission review.

Building and Tree Massing -

Mr. Cantrell related that the basic site planning concept can be described as a low massed streetwall along Foothill, permeated by passageways to the interior. As proposed, the park would not interrupt the streetwall and views

from the Foothill access road would focus on the park. The Design Commission explicitly wanted to preclude axial views of the Sport Chalet office building from the Foothill access road so it was not viewed as a monumental building. Therefore, large masses of tree plantings are relied upon to not only screen the office building, but also the east side of 'A' and its loading dock, and the parking structure. The central parking structure also has an abundance of landscaping through design review.

Building design follows a traditional approach in terms of massing and details. The street fronting buildings generally observe the low massing mandated by the Specific Plan, although height limits are exceeded in some instances. Taller elements mark the corners and stepping of building mass with the slopes.

The Design Commission and staff shared a mutual concern that the design should be more detailed to attain the character of early 20th century development that evolved over time, rather than a carefully designed center that was built as a single project. Staff was now evaluating the "bones" of the project, with final details to be determined through further design review.

Another concern of the Commission was the extent of sloped roofs on all buildings with the exception of 'A'. The roof plan reveals a thin application of roof form. This led to the Commission imposing a condition requiring an average of 75% increase in the sloped roof area. Mr. Cantrell noted that the applicant submitted a revised roof plan, which has not been evaluated by Staff or the Design Commission.

Signage - can significantly impact the character of this project. Though specific information has not been provided, the elevations show intended locations with no inherent conflicts. External illumination is predominant and Staff anticipates only 3 monument signs at the two new street intersections and at the corner of Foothill/ Angeles Crest Highway.

Mr. Cantrell noted that the drawings reviewed by the Design Commission were inconsistent in vertical accuracy. This was accentuated by the exaggeration of the height of some of the human forms. (he believed the project in essence, provides one)

Foothill Boulevard Overview -

Mr. Cantrell emphasized the importance of understanding the relationship of the buildings as a series, though no one would see the entire project from a straight view as on the full frontage elevation drawing. An elevation of the entire Foothill frontage was provided in the packets, which Staff believed illustrated the concern with the massing of 'B' and 'F'.

Building 'A'

This nearly square building is oriented towards the North Road and is the major tenant; at 45,000-sf in area, it meets the maximum floor area established in the Specific Plan. Its at-grade parking would be shared with the front pad buildings, however the majority of its parking, would be provided on the roof via a ramp at the northwest corner of the building. Architectural style is mandated by the Specific Plan in terms of influence; the Craftsman style of 'A' seems to work well and reflects its proximity to the Sport Chalet office building's design. Through design review, the applicant refined the design of this building. The stair tower provides asymmetry within the central gable roof. A mansard roof is located between the entry gable and the narrow, high gable that terminates the east end of the front elevation. Mansard roofs are used effectively by terminating at the gable so they are not revealed as an applied element. A central gable extends over the parking deck – Mr. Cantrell stated it is important to have that deep element. The west and north sides of the building are appropriately low key and serve as a backdrop to the landscaping; the east side would be more visible from the park. The forward portion of 'A' wraps around and is more ornate than the rear, which faces the freeway and is very modest. The applicant, Design Commission and Staff studied this aspect carefully and determined that it was a matter of screening, to preclude it being viewed as a big box.

The Specific Plan imposes a wall height maximum of 24 ft on this building (it does not face Foothill), and an overall height of 32 ft. --- it is silent on the measurement of height and the provision of architectural elements. To be consistent with the grade measurement and architectural bonuses allowed for Foothill-fronting buildings, Staff measured the height from adjacent grade, and architectural extensions up to 34 ft for walls and 38 ft for roofs. This is consistent with treatment for buildings fronting Foothill. Staff and the Commission considered this building as being attractive and well-scaled and recommended approval for this component of the Zone Change request.

Building 'B'

This 22,210-sf building plays a pivotal role in anchoring the south entry. Its large floor plate leads to a significant grade difference (11 ft+) at the southeast corner of the building. The Design Commission was concerned with the height, based on concept elevation drawings that showed a grade difference of approximately 7 feet; the grading plan was not available at that time. Staff recommended a condition limiting floor elevation to 3 ft above sidewalk grade in the southeast corner. Sole access to this building would be from the northwest corner of the building, oriented to parking and, to some extent, to 'A'. Staff views the lack of an entry near Foothill as unfortunate, but it is less important to Staff than a high floor height above street grade at the corner; Staff looked forward to the Commissioners observations.

Three side elevations would be visible and are therefore important. The loading dock, which would front the street, was discussed at length in design review. In the end, the building was shifted westerly to create a substantial landscaping strip to adequately screen the east wall. Mr. Cantrell stated that architecturally, “the building has a long way to go”; massing and refinement of the tower are concerns. The tower is 43 ft above the sidewalk if grade is measured at 11 ft below the slab. Additionally, the corner entry seems over scaled. A height table was included in the packets, but Staff felt it was better to rely on the elevation drawings, since the complexity of the code regulation doesn’t lend itself to table summaries. The Design Commission and Staff viewed the overall scale as well-conceived in proportion to the Foothill streetwall, but its corner tower was questionable and the design needs to be revised. Staff’s fundamental concern was the proposed height of approximately 43 ft higher than sidewalk level (15 ft above the bonus limit). The height is further accentuated when contrasted to the low massing of the adjacent Taylor’s restaurant.

Staff’s recommendation was to limit only the finished floor elevation and to lower the tower from 45 ft to 35 ft.

Building ‘C’

This 9,100-sf building fronts Angeles Crest Highway. When reviewed by the Design Commission, it featured a full width, true hipped roof on the north end, parallel to the North Road. Since that review, the roof was revised to a simple rectangle, surrounded by a mansard. Staff regards that as a negative revision, subject to further review by the Design Commission. ‘C’ steps down the slope from Angeles Crest Highway to the North Road; the street elevation is approximately 8 ft higher than finish floor at the north end, and 5 ft at the south end.

The Design Commissioners raised concerns with the building’s height immediately adjacent to the courtyard, which could appear over-scaled at the focal corner of Angeles Crest and Foothill. A condition of approval assures that the building height can be adjusted following submission of more detailed studies. This building is modestly scaled, with finish floor below grade for most of its street frontage. The requirement to screen rooftop equipment is a challenge for this building in particular, given its limited height and potential views from upslope on Angeles Crest Highway. Those concerns are flagged through future design review of roof configurations.

Building ‘D’

This 8,000-sf building forms the other edge of the courtyard and anchors the Foothill/Angeles Crest corner. It is a corner building and faces ‘C’ across the court. A building tower recognizing the importance of the intersection was viewed as too nautical in appearance by the Design Commission. Further,

building height along Foothill exceeds the allowed 14-ft height maximum, the east end street-facing wall at 27.3 ft exceeds the 24-ft bonus height limit for walls, and the tower exceeds the 28-ft bonus height. The Commission and Staff evaluated the excess height and determined that Code was too restrictive in this instance, as the building's scale is appropriate; however, the Commission added a condition that allows further refinement of the tower.

Building 'E'

This is an effective "bridge" building. It is a positive element, with three finish floor levels and street entries. That enables the building mass to be better modulated than is the case with the larger floor plate buildings flanking it.

Even this low-slung building tests the limits of DVSP height regulations, showing how the regulation works against reasonable development and varied massing.

Taylor's Steaks building -

The existing Taylor's restaurant is 5,585-sf in area - exterior changes are not proposed. The west wall would be exposed to a new entry wall, which calls for careful landscaping and detail work that would be further reviewed at the final design stage. The Design Commission's Resolution requires paseos between D & E and E & B to be enhanced with an architectural statement or prominent landscaping to soften the building mass. The rear of Taylor's is currently an unattractive area that would have to be re-graded. Mr. Cantrell stated that any approval should include a condition requiring removal of nonconforming structures and fencing.

Building 'F'

This 8,300-sf structure is located at the east end of the Foothill frontage and forms a transition to development outside the project. It is eclectic in appearance and has a nice expression of rhythm. Similar to 'E', it steps down and has tenant entrances from Foothill. Despite its low massing, it exceeds the amount of wall allowed with the bonus. Staff considers the east end of the building as presenting a scale problem in relationship to the adjacent property.

Building 'G' -

This is a 7,300-sf office/retail use. It is an interior building with access from the North Road and parking to the west. The only proximate structures are the residences to the east. Finish floor is elevated above Lillian Court a modest 4½ ft at the north end and it is code compliant with regard to height. There is a concern of Staff that the protected Chinese elms, which identify the adjacent residential block could be affected by construction.

Parking Garage -

Provides more parking and creates an intimate pedestrian experience as long as landscaping is effectively handled. The Design Commission discussed lowering the structure - it is currently at grade with the surrounding parking lot. The Commission recognized that it could be lowered, but decided against the concept. Since the garage is located between 'E' and 'B' and is the primary path to 'A' - the intent is to make the area as attractive as possible. Lowering the structure would make the adjacent path to 'A' less inviting because it would lead into a low space, and would require more steps to reach the North Road from the lower parking level. The Design Commission required increased landscape screening around the structure, specifically along the east corner, next to the North Road.

Since the structure does not front on Foothill, it is not subject to the 14-ft height limit, (though it would conform if that were the case). Aside from the elevator tower, the Commission and Staff viewed the parking garage as appropriate and essential to its setting. The elevator tower faces the center court and fulfills an important role in forming a focal point for the court and framing it from the street.

Lastly, there was some discussion of the service facilities. Loading areas and trash enclosures are tied to the individual buildings, rather than in centralized locations. The Specific Plan calls for such areas to be located away from public streets and at the rear or side of buildings, and screened from public view to the extent possible. With the exception of Building 'A' (the trash area would face the street, but at a distance more than 200 ft), 'B', which has a trash area deficit and Taylor's where the trash area needs upgrading, the project meets the requirements of the Plan.

Commissioner Gelhaar requested further information on the possibility of lowering the slab on 'B' and on the parking structure.

Mr. Cantrell responded that there is no connection between the two structures. 'B' is accessed from the parking lot to its west; Staff was merely suggesting to reduce the slab on the Foothill --- it is an operational cost that the developer would probably like to avoid.

Responding to questions from Commissioner Mehranian, Mr. Cantrell reported there was a general concern with the amount of sloped roof area --- the condition requiring a percentage of more fully developed roofs applies to all buildings except 'A'. Building 'B' is a different situation and still needs work. The applicant just submitted revised plans for the corner of 'B', which Staff has to review.

Director Stanley commented that there are two schools of thought to reduce the height of 'B' --- reduce the interior finish floor or, the applicant believes he can achieve a reduction through architectural design. Earlier in the day, sketches revising 'B' were received. The concerns were raised so that the Commission is aware of them.

Commissioner Mehranian commented on the landmark project and asked for further details regarding the North Road.

Director Stanley explained that an alternate location for the North Road had to be found upon recognizing that Caltrans would not accept any of the City's twelve design concepts to modify the Craig Avenue/Angeles Crest intersection. The Shell Station is a roadblock and given the site constraints, the only alternative was to relocate the North Road below the Shell Station. The Specific Plan also calls for Marvin Street to connect to the North Road; the problem was that making a left turn from Bel Air to westbound Foothill would be difficult, with such a short segment to the Marvin intersection leading to the North Road. The problem then became where to locate Marvin so it wasn't an issue. It was ultimately decided to establish a connector road on the west side of Taylor's restaurant and signalize the intersection similar to Foothill/Alta Canada. This was seen as more productive than trying to squeeze-in two connector roads.

Addressing the tree removal, all but 34 trees would be removed. He noted that all trees on commercial property are protected.

The Planning Commission was requested to consider revising the height requirements that apply to all properties in the Specific Plan area

Zone Change - Mr. Cantrell noted that the requested zone change would amend the standards of the Downtown Village Specific Plan with respect to combining Beulah and Marvin and provide one connector road, thereby reducing the number of access drives off Foothill (Staff viewed this as beneficial as it highlights the park - 2 access roads would not have that result). Paseos between the buildings break the building mass and allow views to the interior. Building height is explicitly called out in the DVSP. Staff believes the standards imposed on the Foothill-fronting buildings were single-minded and meant to protect views of the mountains ---- deferring that experience to motorists; views through the paseos frame the mountains. The Draft Mitigated Declaration recommends how to deal with the height, allowing the Design Commission to override the height limits consistent with design review findings. Alternatively, Staff has offered a simple set of numerical regulations in the staff report that would apply to all properties located in the DVSP.

Conditional Use Permit -- is required for projects in the DVSP more than 10,000-sf in area ("A"), for service of alcohol and office uses (in 'G'). The findings are directed at potential impacts, mostly to surrounding neighbors and the exposure to residential uses of noise, light, glare, etc. Staff's analysis considered extending the building wall to the west, to create a barrier from noise emanating from Foothill (the project would not exceed ambient noise from the freeway). Staff ultimately determined that "G" and its landscaping would provide a buffer to the east, and the park would provide a distance buffer from "A".

Glare - on site parking would be effectively screened from off-site. Staff's sole concern was lighting for the rooftop parking and deck on "A" and the parking structure. Mitigation measures are identified in the Mitigated Negative Declaration, which addresses shielding, etc.

Traffic and Parking - The City's consulting Traffic Engineer favorably reviewed circulation and parking, noting that the Parking Code applied to this project was a ratio of 3.75 per thousand ft of gross floor area. Parking standards required in the Specific Plan apply when a Parking District is in place; since one doesn't exist, determination of parking adequacy is left to the Director of Community Development. A parking matrix showing 789 spaces was displayed on Power Point, which could be reduced to 601 parking spaces with a Parking District in place. The applicant's traffic engineer and the City's Traffic consultant reviewed the numbers and they believe the site is adequately parked based on the proposed uses.

Developer Darrin Mattix clarified for Commissioner Cahill that 610 parking spaces are provided --- that number includes available on-street parking.

Commissioner Cahill inquired why the existence of a Parking District would allow reduction of the 789 space code requirement to 601 spaces.

Director Stanley responded that the idea of a Parking District originated with the Specific Plan and the recognition that existing uses do not have sufficient parking. The concept is that a person would park once and walk, rather than drive to the various locations within the project. Staff believes that this project is in essence providing its own parking district. Nevertheless there is a concern of maintaining Taylor's business during construction; a valet parking concept has yet to be submitted. Staff believes that a phased project would be realistic.

Chairman Davitt confirmed that the site's parking spaces would not be tenant-specific.

Director Stanley advised that reciprocal parking access would be required among all parcels and suggested including a condition to that effect.

Chairman Davitt confirmed that a master covenant would run with the land.

Director Stanley continued with comments on the CUP and noted there are no special parking requirements for the realty use and serving of alcohol. Other technical reports such as hydrology, geology, liquefaction analysis, hazardous materials, etc., all concluded the site as suitable for purposes of this project.

Tentative Parcel Map - the project would create 7 parcels, including Craig Street, north of the Shell Station, which is to be vacated and noted as "parcel 7". Ownership of that parcel is under discussion.

Cut and Fill - approximately 35,000 cubic yards of earth would be cut of which 12,250-cubic yards would be exported, requiring approximately 1,000 truck trips. The site's proximity to the freeway and demonstrated accessibility for trucks mitigates concern with this issue. The draft conditions require Public Works' approval of a haul route and schedule.

Technical Review - The consulting City Engineer's comments include the need for a 5-ft dedication along Foothill. Since the project extends to the curb line, the project would have to dedicate another 5 ft. However, the DVSP shows an ultimate dedication along Foothill at 100-ft, which translates to another 2 ft of dedication. Director Stanley commented that it would be difficult to get 2 or 5 ft from Taylor's, which abuts the sidewalk. He reported of having checked with the Traffic Engineer who conceded that not much would be gained by 2 ft.

Commissioner Cahill remarked that the Design Commission wanted modulation along Foothill. He requested an opinion regarding the dichotomy of the General Plan's requirement for a 5-ft setback and the Specific Plan's 2-ft requirement.

Deputy City Attorney Cobey commented that she needed to analyze the issue, but her first instinct is that the Specific Plan would override the General Plan, since it is the most recently adopted plan.

Commissioner Cahill confirmed that the Commission is not bound by the restriction.

Director Stanley noted that bump-outs are key requirements in the DVSP. An extensive bump-out is reflected along "B" and the existing bump-out in front of Taylor's would be extended toward "F". The design needs detail and clarification given with regard to curb and walkway elevations.

Commissioner Gelhaar confirmed that the bump-outs would eliminate some street parking and that signalization would be provided.

Director Stanley continued, advising that there may be an issue with sewers. The existing sewer line runs from the Sport Chalet corporate office building to the existing Beulah extension. Moving the extension means that the sewer needs re-routing into the public right-of-way. Additionally, sewer performance problems behind and east of Taylor's restaurant need to be reviewed by the City Engineer.

Storm Drain Capacity - plans show a retention basin within the proposed park. Staff questions that strategy as it could affect use of the park after rain storms. Staff believes an alternate retention site or alternate means of retention should be investigated.

Consistency with the General Plan - Staff determined that the project is consistent with the General Plan pending resolution of the question of precedence on the extent of Foothill Boulevard dedication as previously discussed.

Public Agency Reviews - comments will be incorporated in the Staff report following conclusion of the comment period for the Mitigated Negative Declaration.

Tree Removal - of the 281 total trees on site, 247 would be removed; 69 of those are protected species. The majority of trees to remain are on the office building site. Staff has concerns with protecting 3 Chinese elms along the east property line, because of the proposed grade change. Staff believes that large trees, located in the middle of the proposed North Road could be successfully relocated.

Commissioner Mehranian confirmed that the Commission could add a condition addressing tree relocation and exceed the mitigation measures.

Marianne Tanzer with EIP, who contracted to prepare the environmental report, briefly reviewed CEQA and the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) process. The MND found that the issue areas are less than significant with mitigation, including impacts related to trees and lighting. Mitigation measures require either relocation or replacement at a 3:1 ratio for scenic trees and prohibits lighting effects from the parking structure's rooftop. Traffic at the intersection of Foothill and Bel Air could be mitigated through prohibition of left turn movements and queuing at Angeles Crest and Foothill would exist regardless of the project.

Commissioner Hill commented that the former gas station at 971 Foothill (building "D") was not addressed in Phases I or II. He was concerned with any hazardous materials associated with underground storage tanks.

Ms. Tanzer advised that she would investigate and report.

Commissioner Gelhaar remarked on the numerous mitigation recommendations and asked if the conditions included hiring a consultant at the applicant's expense, to monitor the project's progress and assure that all conditions are met.

Ms. Tanzer responded that a Mitigation Monitoring Program is provided, including a check list for the City to assure that all conditions are identified and met.

Director Stanley added that Staff could include a Cost Recovery condition.

The Commission recessed at 7:55 p.m. and reconvened at 8:00 p.m.

Responding to a question from Chairman Davitt, Director Stanley advised that the paseos are not narrow or hidden; they are shown at approximately 25-ft-wide and are intended to provide a landscaped and pedestrian friendly experience.

Chairman Davitt invited the applicant to present his project, followed by public comments on the project and on the Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration. He emphasized that this was an informational meeting and that a decision would not be made at this point.

Darren Mattix, president of Mattix Development Partners and applicant for the La Cañada Town Center, introduced Craig Steel, his land use attorney, Chuck Foley, Landscape Architect, Steve Green, Traffic Engineer and representatives from Seaboard Engineering and from Perkowitz + Ruth, architects. Mr. Mattix commented that this project represented individual and cumulative efforts and he acknowledged the efforts of Staff, Mr. Cantrell and the Design Commission, which began in October 2005. Sub-committees formed from the Design and Planning Commissions and the City Council provided invaluable input. Because of those collective efforts, he was in substantial agreement with the recommendations of the MND. The setbacks, grading of the park, storm water mitigation and relocation of the North Road were not for his convenience, but stemmed from the situation encountered by Staff with Caltrans.

Mr. Mattix presented 2 street view concepts; one depicted "B" with a mansard roof, which was altered by the Design Commission. He commented on the difficulty the grade change imposed while attempting to comply with the

DVSP with the grade change, though "A" nicely complied. Angeles Crest is uphill and an access point for the North Road. "C" is kept slightly tucked down and unfolds as it descends from Angeles Crest. He stated that careful review of the civil drawings and grading plan is necessary to understand the scale. He displayed drawings prepared in September 2005, showing "B" lengthwise along Foothill. He was encouraged by the ad hoc committee to reorient "B" to preclude such a large mass along Foothill. Accordingly, "B" was turned at an angle so that the smallest frontage fronted Foothill. Mr. Mattix reported that the prospective tenant, a national bookstore, has specific criteria for buildings that do not meet their rigid standards. He stated that the patio could be eliminated if necessary, in order to provide the quickest access at slab height, as it is at a different grade than Foothill. He added that the tower is an architectural feature and that no one was happy with the way the top of the cylinder turned out, but it works with the roof wrapping around the sides.

He brought alternatives on how to lower the tower's southern elevation.

Responding to Commissioner Gelhaar's request for clarification, Mr. Cantrell explained that Staff's concern was not where the slab step occurred, but only with the slab height at finish floor on Foothill, where it's currently 11 ft high at the southeast building corner.

Director Stanley remarked that lowering the slab 2-3 ft would still allow access to all parking.

Mr. Mattix explained why that was not feasible --- the prospective tenant is concerned with proper access for patrons with handicaps. He approached them with regard to two levels of slab breaks; their response was that they have made enough accommodations. He recognized that Director Stanley's suggestion to suppress the entire slab would bring the patio level down approximately 8 ft; however, it would provide an undesirable side access, which the prospective tenant does not want. Arguably, he could add stairs and a ramp in the corner without a side access but he could maintain a single slab by using one of the alternates. He reiterated that the patio was not necessary, so that he could enclose it, step it back or make it part of the building. He then displayed alternate B (2) , which is what the tenant wants.

Commissioner Gelhaar stated that he was more concerned with the tower's roof than the lower wall at street level. He asked why that couldn't just be landscaped.

Mr. Mattix responded that it could be done.

"F" - a rough attempt was made at a single slab - it doesn't work. At least 3 slabsteps will follow the grade down Foothill.

“G” is tucked into the corner. Mr. Mattix stated he was asking for consideration to allow an office use and noted that the use would make for more available parking at night for restaurants, etc.

He explained the concept of a parking district as allowing free flow of parking among all tenants. He believed the project, as designed, achieves that. If he were allowed to include the 39 street parking spaces in the parking ‘count’, his project would exceed the national standards for parking ratios required in Parking Districts. The project affords full-size stalls, wide aisles, loading areas, and parking is provided in zones. Ideally, one would park once and walk, but there is easy access to move around for those who prefer to move their cars.

Commissioner Hill observed that building “F” would shield the site of a former two-story motel behind McGregor Realty.

Mr. Mattix invited former Design Commissioner John Roberts, to clarify the last set of documents put together by the Design Commission.

Mr. Roberts commented on the record number of meetings – some full-day meetings. He commended the design team on the laborious task in dealing with the corrections and changes. He stated that everyone agreed that this is not the perfect plan; however the Design Commission felt the plan became acceptable and “pretty darn good as it came together”. He noted the many contradictions in the Specific Plan and the reality of applying it to the site. The structures, landscaping and street furniture were designed to change throughout the site and give the flavor that it is part of a town that evolved over time. All zones ‘bleed’ together. Mr. Roberts stated that without question, the design of “B” raised the most concern. The current design in the Planning Commissioners’ packets was not reviewed by the Design Commission.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Gelhaar, Mr. Roberts agreed that “B” ‘s problems could be “landscaped out”, but they should be architecturally solved. He cautioned against designing for a specific tenant that might not be there in 5 years. The Design Commission also saw the need for more visible roofs, while recognizing the need to shield rooftop equipment. He noted that the Design Options Manual’s guidelines call for a certain amount of roof to be provided per sq. ft.

Mr. Cantrell commented that the exact roof configurations are still a work in progress; Staff is also waiting to see the amount of rooftop equipment needed.

Director Stanley pointed out that “C”, which is below street level and fronts Angeles Crest Highway, might need more roofline. Staff also needs to address the rear and west side of Taylor’s Restaurant, which are in dire need of

reworking; perhaps conditions imposed prior to occupancy would be appropriate.

Commissioner Mehranian commented that the only way to deal with the topography constraints is to reduce the size of the building, lowering the slab, lowering the height, or squeeze _____.

Mr. Mattix stated there are numerous ways to depress the slab and reduce the extent ????? of the building without _____. The southern exposure and bringing it down to scale and there's the patio issue. The patio would never be at 4 ft - can't do that. Only way to accomplish any measurable height of the patio is to knock it out and enclose it.

Commissioner Gelhaar inquired when the Design Commission would have an opportunity to review the modifications.

Deputy City Attorney advised that the conditions in the Design Commission's resolution require the Design Commission to work further with the developer on this issue. Any changes would be reviewed by the Planning Commission.

Mr. Cantrell felt it was unfair to rely on the Design Commission's review at this point and what they reviewed was based on elevation drawings. The Planning Commission isn't ruling on the building design as much as the requested zone change --- how Code deals with building heights. The issue of the slab height is separate from the patio height; the building is designed at 43 ft in height whereas code limits the height to 28 ft.

Director Stanley explained that code allows a bonus for wall height --- 24 ft or 28 ft for the roof.????

Chairman Davitt asked Mr. Roberts if the Design Commission felt the submitted height was appropriate with the extension and whether the Design Commission required raising or lowering of towers.

Mr. Roberts responded that the Commission did both. It took the tower higher on 'D', but since it appeared squashed when they looked at the elevations, the Commission revised the concept drawings. In other instances, on "D", the Commission felt the tower should be reduced to pedestrian scale. The Design Commission did not consider the freestanding parking structure as a building; it was not intended to have the same level architectural details --- the Commissioners wanted to "green it out and cover it with vines so that it looked like a landscape feature".

A short discussion ensued regarding which "numbers were acceptable".

Mr. Cantrell observed that the bottom line is there was no need to arrive at a perfect numerical formula, as all projects would go through the Design Commission process.

Commissioner Gelhaar confirmed that all numbers were acceptable with the exception of "B".

Mr. Mattix then noted that the DVSP requires that trash receptacles be located at the rear sides of buildings. He pointed out that "A" does not have a side or rear, "B" and if trash was located for "C" according to the DVSP, customers in the patio would face the trash area. He asked to be allowed to place trash enclosures separate from C, D, F. and G, outside pedestrian areas.

Mr. Roberts stated that it most likely is better that way and less of a frustration for the architect especially in dealing with the inner loop of C, B and E, where a friendly atmosphere is paramount.

Director Stanley reported that Staff is concerned that large, separate trash locations would be a source of odor and visible trash. The intent of the DVSP was to hide the trash areas within the individual buildings. He displayed photos of a large shopping center in Santa Clarita which has successfully carried out that concept. He did not believe it would be a problem with including a trash area in "A". An acceptable alternative would be to place a trash enclosure within the parking structure where it would not be visible to the public. He advised that a condition addressing location of the trash area needed to be added or the Commission will have to change the code.

Sewers -Mr. Mattix reported rumor has it that Taylor's Restaurant wasn't able to connect to Foothill Boulevard, so they directed the laterals to the east.

Marites Dizon, P.E., with Seaboard Engineering, advised that at 60-inch storm drain sits approximately 1½-ft below Foothill. They will attempt to connect directly to Foothill, but if that is not possible, they will connect similarly as Taylor's.

City Engineer Ying Kwan advised that the developer will face a similar challenge on the connector road.

Mr. Mattix addressed Taylor's Restaurant. He reported that Bruce Taylor has retained an architect to upgrade the very visible building. Mr. Taylor has a lease with La Cañada Properties and is cooperating for the benefit of the project, but if Mr. Taylor were to enhance the landscaping on the west side at the City's request, the project would be delayed, waiting for Mr. Taylor to complete his project.

Director Stanley stated that there is no problem with the front and east side of the restaurant and many of the storage structures at the rear were permitted. The intent is to make Taylor's more compatible with the site through a condition of approval.

Craig Steele, counsel for the Mattix Development, advised that the building lease gives Taylor's control over the property ---e.g., the property owner could not decide he wanted the restaurant to have a western theme or paint the building a color unacceptable to the tenant. He recognized that Taylor's is an integral part of the Center and stated it wouldn't make sense to have it remain as is. However, imposing a condition on his client's project as recommended by Staff, puts a big leverage in the tenant's hands. It behooves all to upgrade the rear of the restaurant, but the tenant cannot impose a timeframe on the property owner.

Commissioner Cahill stated that depends on how the lease is worded and the Commission does not have that available.

Mr. Steele stated that even without a specific provision in the lease, a condition as requested by Director Stanley gives Taylor's an unfair advantage over the property owner. His client would prefer a condition that expresses the will of the City.

Deputy City Attorney Cobey stated that barring the developer and Taylor's making the lease available to the Commission, the questions raised by Commission Cahill are correct. The term of the lease - whether year-to-year or a 20-year lease is unknown.

Mr. Steele questioned whether the City has a right to become involved in a private lease that becomes public record, which is what happens if it were turned over to the City. He stated it is a bad idea for a City to tell a land owner "you can't do anything until a tenant does something".

Commissioner Cahill commented that the developer was asking the Commission to blindly accept that there are no provisions in the lease that would require the tenant to make certain improvements.

Chairman Davitt remarked that Taylor's is part of the project. Mr. Steele made his client's position clear, which is duly noted.

Director Stanley stated that absent reviewing the lease, the applicant must advise the City what he intends to do with Taylor's; the plans do not indicate his intent.

Commissioner Hill stated no doubt there are certain things the lease prohibits, but the real issue is the rear. He asked Mr. Mattix if he saw any problems with regard to the east and rear.

Mr. Mattix stated that the grade changes substantially at the rear and that Mr. Taylor was investigating how he could make that work. The nexus is what Taylor does and allowing the project to proceed. Mr. Taylor has never indicated that he doesn't want to upgrade his restaurant.

Mr. Steele commented on the lack of discussion regarding the vacation of Craig Avenue to the north and stated he sympathized with Staff in dealing with Caltrans. The North Road was moved to the south, which he viewed as a swap of right-of-way and putting the North Road on what is otherwise undevelopable property. He is attempting to determine who owns that portion of land and in what form. If the City owns it in fee, it could simply be vacated to the developer.

Mr. Steel added that the final issue is the question of the relationship among the DVSP, the General Plan and the amount of property that could be required to be dedicated on Foothill Boulevard. The General Plan limits what can be dedicated to 5 ft; the Specific Plan states that the absolute maximum that could be required for dedication is 2 ft. His client has taken into account that the building are to be up against the property line, so no need to require the 2 ft. He argued that the extra 2 ft wouldn't solve any problem that the project creates.

Chairman Davitt opened the public hearing.

Jimmy Tan, 822 La Porte, expressed concern with the lack of a barrier between the project and the adjacent residential neighborhood. Mr. Mattix advised that a 6-ft-high landscaped berm would serve as separation, but he doubted that would prevent anyone from traversing it. He stated that in order for the Center to be successful, the developer would want as many customers as possible. He questioned where overflow parking would be accommodated and stated that if the park is easily accessible to nearby residents, it won't take long for others to discover the easy access. Mr. Tam requested a barricade such as a wall or wrought iron fence. He further advised that his neighbors are concerned with what could be years of construction parking and wanted assurance that contractors would not park on La Porte or Houseman.

Bill Koury, liaison for the Shell Station, requested that consideration be given to allowing driveway access to the North Road from the south end of the station's property.

Director Stanley reported that he had one set of plans that shows that concept. The City's Traffic Engineer reviewed it and felt it was viable. Staff needs additional plans for distribution.

Further comments were not offered and the public hearing was closed.

Chairman Davitt asked if his colleagues had any further comments on the process or project.

Commissioner Gelhaar stated that he was excited about having the project proceed. The Design Commission has worked diligently to make it appear as the buildings were designed separately and over time --- "a great concept". He suggested adding a condition requiring hiring an inspector at the expense of the applicant to assure that follow through with the mitigation measures.

Commissioner Mehranian saw this as a landmark project and emphasized the importance in what it will do for the City. She asked that the applicant explore the possibility of relocating or maintaining some of the trees slated for removal. Also, the height of "B" is a longstanding issue. She thanked Staff, the subcommittees and the Design Commission for their efforts with this project.

Commissioner Cahill observed the 4 items the Commission was asked to change in the Specific Plan: 1) relocation of the North Road, which seemed reasonable, given the constraints that Caltrans has placed; 2) reducing the required 2 access roads from Foothill to the North Road to 1 access. Staff's justification seemed reasonable; 3) excess building height - he was convinced from what he heard that there was a singlemindedness to maintain views of the hills, but a village feel is also important. Allowing structures to reach the height of single-family residences is not unreasonable; 4) relocation of the park, which concerned him. Commissioner Cahill related that he moved to the City 5 years ago and looked forward to seeing this particular area improved. He stated that he waited until he received all the paperwork on this project and then identified what he felt were good examples of the village concept e.g., Larchmont Village, So. Pasadena, the Paseo on Colorado, the Grove, Montrose Village, Los Gatos and several small towns on the east coast.

He stated that this project has the feel of a mall; he see parking everywhere. It accommodates cars well, but the goal of the Specific Plan was to create a pedestrian friendly atmosphere. Addressing the park, he stated that it was logical not to have it front Foothill, but its proposed location is not logical - it appears to be a front lawn for the Sport Chalet corporate office building, rather than an urban park where people would gather. He encouraged the Design commission to continue to work with the developer to make the buildings more architecturally significant and more human scale. He noted that the

Paseo Colorado is a tall concept, but walking around is very pleasant. He supported a setback at the front to provide walking room.

Regarding the trash enclosures – the developer’s request is similar to a mall concept, which is not pleasant. He stated that we don’t need to see trash bins even if they are within enclosed structures.

Taylor’s Restaurant – he would not want to give one person leverage over the project but the Planning Commission needs to know the parameters of the landlord’s rights in order to make an assessment. He stated it is appropriate to have a condition to have the rear area cleaned.

He supported Commissioner Gelhaar’s idea of a supervisory consultant overseeing compliance with the conditions.

Signage – if it will appear as presented, it is acceptable, but he wanted assurance there would not be any huge signs.

“B” – he was not aware of the tenant’s requirements until this evening. The request seems reasonable, but as former Commissioner Roberts mentioned, that can’t be the only criteria – that tenant may not be around in 5 years. He asked for modulation of “B” to preclude a bunker feel; we can’t have an 11-ft-high wall facing the street.

Trees – are a great concern; “it is clear that 88% of the trees would be wiped out”. He was willing to concede much of that issue to the Design Commission. The most concrete views would be of the park, walkways and pedestrian areas; the park could be replaced with something that would promote pedestrian activity, rather than having a park that won’t be used much.

Commissioner Hill agreed with Commissioner Cahill regarding location of the trash areas and with Director Stanley’s concern that a single trash receptacle area might initially appear acceptable, but there would not be any control with scattered trash. He questioned if the park would become an accumulation basin for storm drain water runoff. He asked Staff to check whether 975 Foothill – the Sport Rental site which previously accommodated a gas station, was cleared for hazardous materials and soil clean up and if the machine behind Taylor’s is a generator and does it include an underground storage tank.

Chairman Davitt referenced John Roberts’ statement that this can’t be a perfect project based on the site’s topography and constraints of the Specific Plan and Design Options Manual. He looked forward to seeing the project proceed, but he had concerns with the height of building “B”, location of the trash areas, the water retention issue on the park after heavy rains, the hiring of an inspector,

the Foothill dedication issue and overflow traffic on neighboring streets. Shell's request for access to the North Road seemed reasonable. Lastly, he advised that a resident of Houseman who had to leave, approached the Commissioners during the break with a request for a barrier along Houseman during construction to protect the adjacent neighborhood.

Director Stanley stated that he compiled a list of remaining issues and asked if the Commissioners believed they could arrive at a determination at the next regularly scheduled meeting or should a special meeting be called.

Chairman Davitt stated that he did not want to rush this highly visible and consequential project. After confirming that there were only two items scheduled for the July 11th meeting, it was decided to continue the matter to that date. M/S/C Hill/Cahill to continue CUP 403, TPM 066591, Zone Change 06-01, Tree Removal and the Mitigated Negative Declaration to July 11th. Unanimous.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no further business to discuss.

IX. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

Comments were not offered.

X. COMMENTS FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Director had no further comments.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C Gelhaar/Mehranian to adjourn at 10:13 p.m. Unanimous.

Secretary to the Planning Commission