

Planning Commission Staff Report



Author: Kirsten Whetstone
Subject: Treasure Hill CUP
Date: October 13, 2004
Type of Item: Administrative – Site Visit and Work session

Planning

Summary Recommendations:

The planning staff requests the Commission review and continue to discuss the Treasure Hill CUP as it relates to conditional use permit criterion # 11 (physical design and Compatibility with surrounding structures in Mass, scale, style, design, and architectural detailing).

The planning staff met with the applicants on October 7, 2004, to review revised plans and to discuss various alternatives regarding building height zone modifications. Staff and the applicant will present these revisions at the work session.

Staff is requesting this site visit and work session to continue the discussions that staff and the Commission have had with the applicants regarding revisions to the proposed site plan and building volumetrics (in terms of massing, stepping, articulation, setbacks, heights, etc.). Staff recommends the Commission focus on the physical design, ie. Mass and scale (elevations and site plan), well as on the Compatibility with surrounding structures in terms of heights, articulation, setbacks, buffering, landscaping, etc. and delay discussion of specific architectural concepts and detailing for a future meeting.

Description:

Topic:

Project Name: Treasure Hill (Mid-station and Creole Gulch parcels of the Sweeney Properties Master Planned Development)
Applicant: MPE, Inc.
Location: Empire Avenue
Proposal: Request for approval of a CUP and preliminary subdivision plat for 197 UE residential and 19 UE commercial (approximately 282 condominium/townhouse/hotel suites ranging in size from 650 sf to >2,500 sf and approximately 19,000 sf (net) resort related support commercial uses), 473 parking spaces, and up to 10% of the gross floor area for meeting rooms and support uses. Resort related amenities are also proposed, such as pools, spas, etc. The proposal includes approximately 51 acres of dedicated open space for ski runs, trails, and passive use. The proposal includes a revised Town Lift chair lift/cabriolet people mover system.
Zoning: E-MPD (Sweeney Properties Master Planned Development) and ROS (Recreational Open Space)

Adjacent Uses: Ski resort and related uses, single-family residences, condominiums, bed & breakfast inns, and open space.
Date of Application: January 13, 2004
Project Planner: Kirsten Whetstone

Conditional Use Permit Review

For the October 13 meeting, the applicants have prepared a presentation for work session, including a revised visual analysis and computer model to address CUP criterion 11 (physical design and Compatibility with surrounding structures in Mass, scale, style, design, and architectural detailing). The applicants have agreed to focus the work session discussion on the building heights, mass, scale, setbacks, and orientation on the site. Discussion of the architectural detailing will occur at a future meeting.

As presented at the August 25 and September 22 meeting, Staff has outlined below a preliminary analysis of the Treasure Hill CUP as it relates to Conditional Use Permit criterion 11 (staff comments are in italics):

Criterion # 11 (physical design and Compatibility with surrounding structures in Mass, scale, style, design, and architectural detailing)

Staff requests discussion. This criterion should be considered in the context of the 1985 Sweeney Properties Master Plan approval, which shed density from the overall MPD property, including the steep slopes of Treasure Hill, primarily to the two parcels that make up the Treasure Hill CUP. These parcels were approved in the 1985 MPD as a resort area base, such as Snow Park, Silver Lake, and the Park City Mountain Resort village area, where typically, development is clustered in mass around landscaped open space, pedestrian plazas, and ski runs/trails, leaving significant open space around the perimeter and beyond.

Typical solutions for clustering in this type of resort base area are to reduce overall building footprint and by increasing building height and to provide underground parking. This was to provide more open space and limits the amount of disturbed area, while providing the increased tourist-based density (bed base) in close proximity to resorts, ski lifts, ski runs, and other tourist amenities, such as restaurants, bars, shops, galleries, etc.

The approved MPD includes building height zones (see Exhibits) as well as a maximum average height for the parcels. The applicants have submitted a height matrix to demonstrate that the proposed site plan and building massing complies with the approved MPD height zones and overall average height requirements. Staff has discussed potential amendments to the MPD approved height zones to provide additional flexibility in building placement, stepping, and height. The applicants are not inclined to re-open the approved Master Plan without further specific discussion with the Planning Commission. Staff seeks discussion on this issue.

The overall site and building design includes elements of building massing, horizontal and vertical stepping, orientation and separation from surrounding buildings, and includes landscaping and screening to provide buffering and physical separation from adjacent structures to address compatibility. These elements have been proposed to provide a design that addresses a strategy to integrate an intensive mixed use resort base area development into the context of the existing predominately historic residential district/neighborhood abutting this MPD. This existing neighborhood is a mix of new and historic single-family homes. There are also scattered duplexes, four-plexes, bed and breakfast inns, and other larger homes and buildings in the area. The project area is visible from the Historic District and Main Street Business District.

At the August 11 and September 22, 2004 Commission meeting, the applicant presented sections through the project demonstrating the heights of surrounding buildings in comparison to the heights of the proposed buildings and also showing the horizontal and vertical separation. These sections have been revised to reflect the proposed changes, as follows (see Exhibits):

- Lower the entire project into the ground by 2-3 feet and compress floor to floor dimensions to reduce entire heights by 5- 10 feet.*
- Shift building volumetrics from the northern edge to the center and back of the project, ie. On buildings 4a and 4b, several stories have been removed providing a series of 3 story steps. (Applicants are also looking at removing the northern most units of the second step to provide additional horizontal articulation.) The resulting building heights for the northern edge of 4a and for the eastern portion of 4b (where it is visible from the Garda's and Larson's decks) has been reduced to 30-35' in height from existing grade at the building edge. The second three story step in building 4b (increasing the height to 40-45' above existing grade) now occurs nearly 200' (horizontally) back from Lowell Avenue.*
- Providing horizontal stepping along sections of the northern most elevation of buildings 4a and 4b, by stepping the northern sections back towards the south. On building 4a an entire floor on the northern half of the building has been removed, and the entire building has been lowered.*
- Deleting one townhouse unit from 1C, lowering the height of 1B and lengthening 1B towards new 1C, this stretches the building out and lowers the overall height from the previous plan.*
- Increase and stagger project setbacks along the north property line providing 100-150' separation between the proposed buildings and the single family homes.*
- Decrease the heights of retaining walls through-out the project.*

In terms of evaluating the Compatibility of the overall design, staff also requested the applicant consider how the development fits into the community as a whole, as viewed from various vantage points (not specific SLO vantage points, but from areas of town where the project is visible, such as the Town Lift, Heber Avenue, City Park at Deer Valley Drive, Lowell Avenue, and from the Aerie). The

applicants have provided a visual analysis from various locations and will present that to the Commission at the work session.

*Just as the buildings on Main Street and Lower Main Street are larger and taller than the surrounding single family structures, this property was identified in the Master Plan (by approval as part of the Master Plan Development of a height zone exhibit- Sheet 22 of the MPD- that identifies areas of taller and larger structures with maximum building heights (MBH) of up to 75'). The MPD consolidated and clustered the density from 125 acres into a mixed use resort base area of about 15 acres (including the Sweeney Town Lift Plaza/Caledonian Condo area). **(The applicants will present a revised massing model and a revised visual analysis for Commission discussion at the work session. Revised cross-sections, alternate views of the massing mode from various view points, further revised visual analysis, and architectural detailing will be provided at the meeting on November 8, 2004.)***

Staff acknowledges that it will be difficult to achieve a project massing that is similar to the existing neighborhood context given the previously approved density and volumetrics set forth in the 1985 MPD. The objective of this administrative application of the CUP criteria is to determine whether or not the proposed project provides sufficient stepping of building masses, reasonable horizontal and vertical separation between the proposed buildings and adjacent structures, and an adequate peripheral buffer so as to limit the potential for larger building masses looming over smaller adjacent structures.

The applicants continue to work with staff to study the above listed strategies specifically as they relate to buildings 4A and 4B (please refer to project site plan) as they are the largest structures with closest proximity to adjacent residential structure (see Exhibits). The purpose of the work session is to continue these discussions with the Planning Commission.

The applicants have also identified specific strategies to address the Planning Department's concerns with the project's retaining wall system, including lowering the entire project, additional stepping to the walls, including areas for landscaping, and additional design concepts (use of different materials, stone work, timbers, etc) similar to those used at the Town Lift and the Transit Center.

SUMMARY

After a preliminary analysis of the proposed site plan, proposed setbacks, and building massing, staff believes the overall plan complies with the technical required setbacks, volumetrics, and height limitations as stated in the approved MPD. Staff also believes that the general concepts for the cliff scape, retaining wall design concepts, and landscaping within the project and in buffer areas will help to mitigate some of the impacts on adjacent properties created by this project.

Staff requests input from the Commission regarding the proposed revisions as listed above, and to be further described by the applicant at the October 13, 2004 work

session, regarding building height, massing, articulation, orientation, and setbacks as they relate to Compatibility issues specific to the Conditional Use Permit.

Departmental Review

The Treasure Hill CUP and preliminary subdivision plat were discussed at staff review meetings on May 7 and October 14, 2003, and February 3, June 10, July 6, and September 22, 2004. Additional staff review meetings will be held in response to revised plans.

RECOMMENDATION

The applicants have prepared revisions to the plans seen at the September 22, 2004 presentation that addressed criterion #11 (LMC Section 15-1-10 (E) (11)). The Staff recommends the Commission review and discuss at work session the revisions as they relate to the approved MPD and the Land Management Code requirements for Conditional Use Permits, specifically criteria #11. The applicant will present these revisions in detail.

Staff requests the Commission provide specific input as to whether any additional revisions to building height, massing, articulation, orientation, and setbacks are necessary to address Compatibility issues specific to the Conditional Use Permit process (specifically Criterion #11).

Staff also requests Planning Commission discussion/direction on whether or not the Commission is interested in amending specific elements of the 1985-86 Sweeney Properties Master Plan that relate to building height and volumetrics. At this time the applicants are staying within the development parameters approved with the 1985/86 Sweeney Properties Master Plan.

Staff has also set up a site visit for October 13, 2004 at 3:30 PM at the Lowell/Empire Avenue switchback.

Exhibit A- Revised Plans

Exhibit B- Background and Project Description from previous reports

Staff will include pdf files of these revisions in the e-packet.