

August 18, 2005

TO: REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: Ellen Fitzgerald  
Land Divisions Section

**SUBJECT: VISTA VERDE RANCH PROJECT NO. 99-028-(5)  
VESTING TENTATIVE TRACT MAP 47449-(5)  
OAK TREE PERMIT NO. 99-028239-(5)**

On February 9, 2005 the public hearing on the above subject project was opened and your Commission heard extensive testimony. The following report provides background and information on subsequent activities.

### **The Project**

Commissioners will recall that the proposal is a request to develop 92 single-family lots, eight open space lots and one driveway lot on a 60 acre property located southerly of Valley Center Avenue, westerly of San Dimas Avenue and northerly of Calle Bandera in the San Dimas Zoned District. The project site is bordered on the north and east by the 90-acre Tzu Chi Foundation ("TCF"). The subject property and TCF were previously under the same ownership and operated as the Pacific Coast Baptist Bible College ("College"). Part of Walnut Creek Wilderness Park is located on the TCF property and portions of the 25-mile Michael D. Antonovich Trail are located on TCF and on the project site. The City of San Dimas is adjacent to both properties to the north, east and south.

### **Oak Tree Permit**

The oak tree permit requests to remove 472 oak trees and encroach into the protected zone of 67 oaks.

### **Concerns raised at the public hearing**

Opposition testimony heard at the public hearing from residents and city of San Dimas representative included concerns on the following:

- Excessive density
- Inadequate information provided in the Draft Environmental Impact Report
- Traffic impacts, particularly if Calle Bandera is used to access the project
- Grading impacts
- Inability of the project to connect to streets and sewer lines in the city of San Dimas due to inadequate easements or city opposition to connection

- Fire danger
- Inability to make necessary improvements required for access through Tzu Chi Foundation property
- Visual impacts
- Impacts to oak resources

At the conclusion of testimony, the Commission advised the applicant that the project should be redesigned, directed the applicant to work with representatives of the city of San Dimas in an attempt to address issues and continued the public hearing. The Commission directed staff to return in six months with a progress report on the project's status.

### **Follow-up activities**

The applicant indicates that they have participated in a total of 14 meetings with city of San Dimas staff and City Council members since the February 9, 2005 public hearing in an attempt to design a project to satisfy the concerns the city raised. According to the applicant's letter to the city's Mayor and Director of Planning, two alternatives were considered, one a low-density estate project with access through Loma Vista Park and the second a project taking access via a bridge from San Dimas Avenue. The first alternative was not pursued as the applicant determined that it was not economically feasible based on research on sales of similar homes in the surrounding area, that there would be continuing concerns related to taking access from the south and that such a design was not consistent with the existing land use designation. The second alternative is the design the applicant is pursuing at this time.

### **Proposed redesign**

The redesigned project is conceptual only at this time as no new tentative map has been reviewed by the Subdivision Committee for technical feasibility. However, staff of the Departments of Regional Planning, Fire and Public Works have worked with the applicant by providing comments on the conceptual plan.

The redesigned project proposes a total of 70 single family lots taking access via a privately maintained bridge from San Dimas Avenue. The bridge would serve as a single point of access to the property, limiting density to a maximum of 75 units. The bridge will span over 600' from San Dimas Avenue with no abutments in the canyon. The bridge would be designed to accommodate the access needs of the Fire Department at 28' but cannot be designed to the 54' width requested by the Department of Public Works and so would need to be maintained privately. Streets within the project would be designed to County street standards, but would also need to be maintained privately as they would connect to the bridge. The proposed lots would not have frontage on a public street, so modifications to lot frontage requirements would likely be necessary. Emergency access only would be provided by Calle Bandera; no public access would be taken from this street. Lots sizes would range from approximately 9,000 square feet to over 31,000 square feet with average sizes in the 11,000 square foot to 18,000 square foot range. The project is clustered on the portions of the property that are relatively flat and previously disturbed. A 1-1/4 acre park is proposed adjacent to Loma Vista Park and approximately thirty acres of the property will be maintained as permanent open space.

The revised design would result in a reduction in grading from 690,000 cubic yards to 230,000 cubic yards, balanced on site. The secondary access to Valley Center Drive, which would have required

significant grading, has been eliminated.

Also, oak tree removals have been reduced. It is anticipated that the maximum oak tree removals would be approximately 137 with the redesigned project.

### **Staff evaluation**

The reduced density allows a project with a single means of access, eliminating the problematic secondary access previously depicted through the Tzu Chi Foundation property. The elimination of that access reduces the loss of oak trees and significantly reduces grading. The clear-span bridge design eliminates several concerns which were raised during the public hearing related to access while also limiting grading impacts associated with the previously depicted access from San Dimas Avenue. The bridge, as proposed at 28' (24' of pavement and 4' sidewalk) meets the minimum standard of the Fire Department. Widening of the bridge to 54' feet to meet DPW standards would result in the need for additional abutments and impacts. The bridge design may create visual impacts which will need to be reviewed. Private maintenance of roadways is a fairly common situation in newer subdivisions. Gated communities of single family residences or any condominium development have privately maintained streets or driveways. Modification of the requirement for single family lots to have frontage on a street could be supported provided necessary findings can be made and it is clear that such a modification is specific to this project only and is not precedent setting for other projects.

### **Recent Correspondence**

Staff has received copies of email correspondence from surrounding residents which are attached.

Staff contacted Larry Stevens of the city of San Dimas who indicated that the applicant had been working with the city and had made progress but that there were still outstanding concerns. He had indicated that he would submit a letter with detailed comments but it was not received in time to include it with this report.

Also attached are copies of correspondence between the applicant and the city of San Dimas.

### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the Regional Planning Commission consider the revised conceptual design and hear testimony from the applicant and other interested parties. After testimony if the Commission feels the redesign is acceptable, the applicant should be directed to submit a revised tentative map for review by the subdivision committee and the hearing continued to a date certain. A continued hearing within three months should provide sufficient time.

### **Suggested Motion**

I move that the Regional Planning Commission direct the applicant to submit a revised tentative map for review by the Subdivision Committee and to submit any revisions necessary for the Draft EIR and to continue the public hearing.

Attachments: Conceptual map  
February 9, 2005 public hearing staff report  
Correspondence

