

**MINUTES OF MEETING  
ALAMEDA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION  
AUGUST 25, 2003  
(APPROVED OCTOBER 6, 2003)**

**SPECIAL JOINT MEETING WITH THE BOARD OF THE SAN LORENZO HOME ASSOCIATION**

The meeting was held at the hour of 6:00 p.m. at San Lorenzo Homes Association, 377 Paseo Grande, San Lorenzo, California

**SPECIAL MEETING: 6:00 p.m.**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Commissioners Ario Ysit, Chair; Frank Imhof; Mike Jacob, Vice Chair; Glenn Kirby; Audrey LePell; Lena Tam

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** Commissioner Compton Gault

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Chris Bazar, Planning Director, Louis Andrade, Planner III; Scott Gregory, Lamphier, Gregory & Associates, Consultants; Maria Marquez, Recording Secretary

There were approximately 60 people in the audience.

**CALL TO ORDER:**

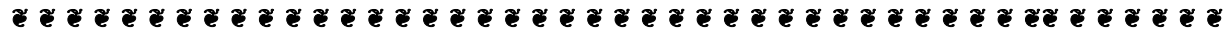
The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIR:** There were no announcements.

**OPEN FORUM:**

Open forum is provided for any members of the public wishing to speak on an item not listed on the agenda. Each speaker is limited to three (3) minutes.

**REGULAR CALENDAR:**



**SAN LORENZO VILLAGE CENTER DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** – Public hearing to take comments on the San Lorenzo Village Center Specific Plan/Town Center DEIR. The Specific Plan covers an area of approximately 29.5 acres consisting of a number of contiguous, non-residential properties located on both sides of Hesperian Boulevard, generally extending from the I-880 overcrossing in the north to Via Mercado in the south. (Continued from July 17, 2002.)

a. Introductory Comments (Supervisor Lai-Bitker) – 6:10 p.m.

Supervisor Lai-Bitker thanked everyone for attending the joint meeting with the Alameda County Planning Commission and the San Lorenzo Village Home Association and said it was interesting to hear the comments about density and affordable housing. She told Mr. Bazar that she needed to understand that the Specific Plan is for the whole 29-acres and the Village was 18.8 acres. The Specific Plan for San Lorenzo was exactly the Village project

Kathie Ready, SLVHA Chair, had some announcements, and said that this was a joint meeting with the Planning Commission. She stated that there was paperwork at the table regarding the San Lorenzo Village Center Specific Plan and Town Center Project, and the SLVHA response to that. She also said that if someone wished to speak, to fill out a Request to Speak form.

b. Report by Staff and EIR Consultant – 6:15 p.m.

Chris Bazar, Planning Director, introduced Scott Gregory, the EIR Consultant, from Lamphier, Gregory and Associates, who would be making the presentation of the San Lorenzo Village Center Specific Plan/Town Center DEIR.

Mr. Bazar referred to the chronology of events, and to a Memorandum sent to the Planning Commission and the San Lorenzo Village Homes Association Board, dated August 19, 2003, which stated that the DEIR was issued and circulated to the public, in June 2003, and was the subject of this joint public meeting.

The original Civic Partners proposal was discussed. This proposal encompassed all of the Plan area. Its key features included 857 dwelling units made up of town houses, lofts and residential flats. Housing for seniors was included, and a new civic center with a new community building and library. A new retail main street with a grocery store, restaurants and other shops would round out the Plan area.

The proposal had been revised, and was now referred to as the “Town Center Project” was significantly revised and entailed only the Bohannon owned parcels,



and excluded the Village Homes Association, the self-storage facility and the tool rental facility.

A presentation of the DEIR had been made by Staff, and the EIR consultant to the San Lorenzo community on July 21, 2003, at a public meeting of the Village Homes Association. The Planning Department had received written comments on the EIR, and would accept further comments until the comment period expired the following day, August 26. As required by law, all comments received would be addressed in the Final EIR.

Mr. Bazar spoke about density concerns, parking, private open space, height setbacks and design.

Planning Department staff and the EIR consultant said they would respond to comments in a separate volume as required under CEQA law. This process would take approximately 30 days. It was hoped that the Final EIR could be certified and approved by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors in December 2003.

- c. Joint Discussion (Planning Commission and San Lorenzo Village Homes Association Board) – 6:55 p.m.

After the EIR consultant presentation, questions and answers followed, regarding fiscal, social and economic impact issues, and concerns about parking, traffic, density and additional fees for the library as a mitigation strategy.

Kathie Ready, from SLVHA, said that they had a response to the Memorandum sent by Mr. Bazar and read it to the audience, expressing her and her community's opposition to the height and density of the proposed residential units. She added that they were very frustrated that the County did not appear to understand their concerns. She felt that the numbers presented by the Planning Department were an insult, and a clear indication that the County staff was not listening to the community.

- d. Public Comment – 7:15 p.m.

Commissioner Tam said she wanted to hear comments from the community. Public testimony was opened.

Lowell Shira, from the San Lorenzo Unified School District, said the EIR presently identified about 2.2 million dollars as a gap between revenue and expenditures, just to accommodate the project. He felt this number was very low because all the project envisions is that they “stuff” all the students into



classrooms and don't provide any library space, computer lab or additional restrooms. He stated that the project envisions three possible solutions. First would be to get the money from a state bond. Second would be to increase property taxes. Third would be to not have needed programs go forward. He added that there were a lot of wonderful things in the project, and he could think of a lot in the project that would benefit everyone in San Lorenzo.

Howard Beckman, a San Lorenzo resident, said a development of this type would have environmental consequences. He felt there were many unsolved questions. He briefly mentioned mitigation and smart growth. He said he was skeptical about the whole EIR process and the revitalization of San Lorenzo. He noted that currently there was a proposal going to Sacramento to build a library in San Lorenzo, and the Planning Department issued a mitigated negative declaration for the project, which included "astounding" conclusions. He used the example of the statement that the traffic that would be created by the library would not have a significant impact. He said he opposed the County "Master" Plan because it does not realize the full developmental potential of this area, due to the Homes Association withdrawing its property. With regard to noise and open space, he stated that there was a tendency in Alameda County to waive away standards and regulations. He felt there was no provision for open space in the Master Plan. He was dissatisfied with the rationalization "Let's be consistent with what other jurisdictions do." He added that this development would induce growth since a project of this scope was going to have a domino effect. He felt there needed to be a better balance between jobs and housing, and addressing this was a huge failure of the EIR.

Herb Crowle, of San Lorenzo, said his comments regarded the 29-acres. He fully agreed with the Board Members' concerns that the Specific Plan should provide sufficient area for parking. His second comment was that he strongly believed that the residential element should be kept at 200 units.

Keith Barros, a San Lorenzo resident spoke about the contents of the DEIR. He stated that the Specific Plan was based on an analysis. The original task force goals and objectives, as well as to the response by Civic Partners to several community concerns. He felt it was very uncertain that there was not a potential traffic problem, especially at the intersection of Hesperian Boulevard and Grand Avenue. He felt there was also a possibility of dense urban problems such as crime. He asked that the Specific Plan to be amended and the cap lowered on the number of residential units in the Specific Plan area. He added that was his commitment.

Tim Sheridan of San Lorenzo, said he had been coming to these meetings for three years only to hear people talking about too much density and not enough parking. He felt nothing had changed. The County completely ignored everything that everybody had asked for. They spoke about number of units and

cars per unit. He didn't see why the community should bother coming to these meetings if the County was going to ignore whatever they wanted.

Nancy Van Huffel, Manager of the San Lorenzo Village Homes' Association, said she had been involved in every meeting. She stated that the Association Board was told they could have retail and there would be housing, but only one hundred houses, not 800 as they proposed, with mixed uses. She said they had been very consistent with their wishes. She felt that too many units were being proposed. She said they didn't want 29 units per acre. She stated that no matter what was in the EIR, it was a policy decision and a policy decision meant the Commissioners and Supervisors would decide what the policy should be for the community. The decision wouldn't be based on this EIR. She added that the Association would be giving written comments. Public testimony was closed.

e. Comments/Recommendations (San Lorenzo Village Homes Association Board) – 7:55 p.m.

Kathie Ready spoke about parking problems. She said staff was dealing with numbers that were not true numbers. She said she wanted to see some development happen because this area needed redevelopment. She noted that things needed to be fixed, and asked why the Planning staff “can't sit down and be realistic about the issues.” She stated that she had read the Housing Element report, and felt that it was going to impact this community hard, as it would every community in the unincorporated area. She felt it was unfortunate that on almost every page where it referred to numbers, extremely low and low income was 20 units or more per acre. She asked if they should cap theirs at 19 units per acre.

Ms. Ready said she considered San Lorenzo a moderate-income community and not a low income community. She asked if that meant that they could have affordable housing. She said that when she read the center of the EIR she thought they were getting close to agreeing on numbers with Civic Partners, but the reality is they are in the same place as they were last year. They related to the Planning Commission last year that they wanted to make the Planning staff realize the community wanted lower density. She stated that if they can do that, they would accept the proposal, they only want to see San Lorenzo improve.

Ms. Ready felt they needed to stick to what was in the (Zoning) Ordinance. She felt they needed to stop “breaking the laws” to make a few people happy. What bothered her was that of the people that have the power over San Lorenzo, the Planning Commission, the Planning staff, the Bohannons and Civic Partners, not one of them lived in San Lorenzo and (none) would have to deal with what happened when it was all over. She added that they have to be there and deal with it. They want this to be the best Plan they could have.

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Jim Sherman, Pat Pebelier, Enrique Barboza and Peggy Sheridan, Members of the SLVHA Board of Directors made their comments on parking, traffic, cars on driveways, etc., and all of them agreed that parking was going to be a problem.

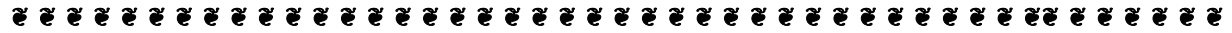
Ms. Ready said the Board had three recommendations. First, they would like to see a supplemental EIR prepared comparing factors between 400 and 850 units, to include ambiance, quality of life, high density, traffic, parking, noise, recreation, educational facilities and open space. Second that the supplemental EIR should provide provided the economic impact information they have been requesting and have not received. Third, that when this issue was discussed and decided by a Board of Supervisors, the meeting should be in San Lorenzo so the community could fully participate.

f. Direction to Staff (Planning Commission) – 8:10 p.m.

Commissioner LePell said she was not present at the July meeting, but noted that she had lived in Cherryland and thought now back in the City of Hayward, so was familiar with what had been going on in the unincorporated area. In response to Mr. Sheridan and the others that spoke, she told them not to be discouraged, and told them that Mr. Bazar was now the Planning Director, and that they would all see a change. She said they also had Supervisors Steele and Lai-Bitker, and they had different attitudes. She told the group that these Supervisors were not trying to ignore them, but wanted to hear what the community had to say. She added that the Commissioners were trying to do their best, and assured the group that she was “super critical” of the staff and other agencies when she thought they didn’t listen to the community, whether some people agreed with that, or not. She asked the Community to please stay there with them. This EIR might not be certified unless it met the standards of the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Tam addressed density issues, stating that she didn’t feel comfortable. She said she understood the concerns of the community with regard to impacts from traffic and parking. She added that as far as the issue of schools was concerned, she didn’t have the proper information on that so couldn’t give direction on that at this point.

Commissioner LePell said she thought that it was a mistake for Planning staff to put an end to the EIR comment period the day after they had this public meeting. She felt citizens and perhaps even Planning Commissioners might think of things they would like to comment on after taking time to digest the concerns expressed that evening. She believed that ending the comment period so soon was wrong, and she respectfully suggested that if this happened again that they allow at least another week after the public meetings on an EIR. She said her concerns were normally environmental, such as water, but noted that transportation and landscaping were not addressed adequately in her opinion, and also noted the



controversy over the Library. She felt it needed to be addressed, as well as concerns about the theater.

Commissioner Ysit commented that parking was inadequate for the number of units that they had. He asked, what happens when you have a lot of units and you don't have enough parking? The answer was that people go off site and park in the communities where the people attending the meeting live. He said he thought this was wrong. He noted that they had found the same problem with BART stations where they have just enough parking for the BART customers, but then they had other people that needed to go into the cities, so than they park all over the communities. He felt that they should look closer at raising the parking from 1.5 to 2. He stated that when they do projects on different apartment houses, they require more parking than what was being proposed here.

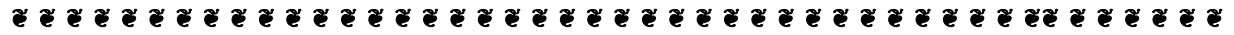
Mr. Bazar gave an explanation of the concerns regarding density. He said the transportation issue was something that was analyzed, and said that they would respond to concerns before the Final EIR. He added that they needed to get a certified CEQA document. He said that at that point, and this was a key point, they would come back to the policy makers, and at that point was where the Specific Plan could be changed. He said that unfortunately it was a complicated analysis, but that staff would take the guidance of the Commissioners.

Commissioner LePell said she was sure that staff was well aware that when developers go to the Commission, they often say they have to have such-and-such number of units to make their project financially feasible, and that the Commission had to use their own good judgement to make a decision. That was what she was asking staff to do. If they couldn't do it and they needed more money, they would have to deal with the Supervisors.

Mr. Bazar said that there had been ongoing discussions with Civic Partners, various key people from the community and Supervisor Lai-Bitker's office, to try to come up with something acceptable. He said his understanding as of that day was that Civic Partners focus was on 550 units. He stated that this was not an absolutely unchangeable number, but 550 units was their place holder for the analysis.

Kathie Ready said that she was not sure what community people Civic Partners had discussed issues with, but it certainly had not been with the Homes Association. She said that they gave their opinion last year in a written document in which they stated that the numbers should be 450, they came back with 550. She repeated what they had said stated before; she really wanted to believe that this would work out well for everyone concerned, but the Board had come to the conclusion that 19 units per acre was appropriate. She said they were actually insulted by the 29 units per acre proposal. She again stated that according to the Alameda County Housing Element, anything over 20 units per acre was





considered low and very low income, 9 to 19 units per acre was considered moderate income. She said this was appropriate as they considered San Lorenzo a moderate-income community.

Chris Bazar said that he wanted to clarify what they consider to be typical income levels. With the type of development proposed by Civic Partners, the low category was typically people like teachers in the Bay Area. He said he believed they make from \$40,000 to \$60,000 a year.

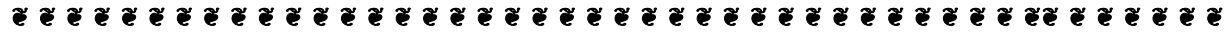
Commissioner Kirby said that those other parcels (not owned by Bohannon) should be left in the plan. He said that looking optimistically, if this project goes through and becomes successful, than there would be a wonderful opportunity the Association. He wouldn't want to have as an unintended consequence that this project would close the door to the future development of other parcels. He believed that the Board right now was naturally reacting to what they saw as something very different than what they were used to, but he felt those parcels should be left in the plan in order not to close the door for a future Board.

Commissioner Kirby said during the time he has been on the Commission, he supported high-density building. He felt this was an urban-type project. Twenty-nine units per acre could be supportable in this area for a project that is less than four stories high. The problem was with all the components that go into it. He was beginning to think that 29 units were not the right density because, as they heard, they had a lot of concern about parking. He stated that parking was very expensive, because so much of the parking proposed in both the Specific Plan and the Village plan would not be surface parking, but is structured parking, including some below ground. He said they were talking about very expensive structures.

Commissioner Kirby stated that another key factor was the transit component, and he wanted to think that this type of an urban project would generate more interest from AC Transit and would generate more ride sharing. Although he might be overly optimistic to think that that's going to happen, since they don't have a BART station nor an Amtrak station. He was having trouble identifying how successful this was going to be as a transit village. Because of these reasons, this would keep the parking numbers up for him.

Mr. Kirby said that if this project had, for instance, a park-and-ride component, which would allow people to use their cars less, he would agree with Mr. Bazar that the type of people that were going to want to live in these units, were different from the type of people that live in single-family units. Their family composition would be different and perhaps their demands for cars would be less. He also said they heard how the densities are affected by the open space requirement. He felt it was important for the quality of life of the residents as well as the quality of the project that they begin to push the density a little bit. He wanted to see this project be successful, not only for the retailers but for the





business people that come in later. He wanted to keep it affordable and perhaps density could be adjustable a little bit, parking could be adjustable a little bit, and open space could be adjustable a little bit.

Mr. Steve Semingson from Civic Partners addressed a couple of issues that he thought had created some misconceptions. First of all, the intent of the meeting that night was to talk about the EIR. Never the less, the Civic proposal did allow for two parking spaces per residential unit, except for the senior housing. He said that parking was separate for the retail and the residential units. He also said they didn't have a requirement for 800, 400 or even 300 units. However, he said the problem was that they didn't know yet how to make the project work to support the retail component that the community was so interested in without the appropriate unit count. He added that the biggest hurdle that they had, was that there wasn't a substantial amount of retail that currently could produce income. He stated that there was no magic formula that allowed then to come up with an economic model that would buy and move the existing retail, and that's the challenge that they have to face as developers. They would have to be able to make that formula work at 450 units, (which may not be feasible.)

Commissioner Jacob said it the speakers were very clear and they have carefully taken all comments into consideration. He said the concerns were things to keep in mind and to keep in the spirit of the EIR.

**COMMISSION ANNOUNCEMENTS, COMMENTS AND REPORTS:**

Commissioner Tam reminded the Commission that the following day, August 26, would be the deadline to submit any further responses.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business, Commissioner Ysit moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m. Commissioner LePell seconded the motion. The motion was carried .

**CHRIS BAZAR, SECRETARY**  
**COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION OF ALAMEDA COUNTY**