

**OFFICIAL MINUTES
MONTEREY PARK PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 25, 2014**

The Planning Commission of the City of Monterey Park held a Regular Meeting of the Board in the Council Chambers, located at 320 West Newmark Avenue in the City of Monterey Park, Tuesday, November 25, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairperson Sullivan called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Planner Tewasart called the roll:

Commissioners Present: Larry Sullivan, Michael Hamner, Ricky Choi, and Stephen Lam

Commissioners Absent: Rodrigo Garcia

ALSO PRESENT: Karl H. Berger, Assistant City Attorney, Michael A. Huntley, Director of Community and Economic Development, Samantha Tewasart, Senior Planner

ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS:

Speaker David M. Barron stated that one of his goals this year is to get the City Planning Commission meeting broadcasted on television live. A lot of the decisions made by the Planning Commission do not go the City Council. The Commission makes a lot of final decisions.

AGENDA CHANGES AND ADOPTION:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

October 28, 2014 –

Action Taken: The Planning Commission approved the minutes of October 28, 2014.

Motion: Moved by Commissioner Hamner and seconded by Chair Sullivan, motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: Commissioners: Sullivan and Hamner

Noes: Commissioners: None

Absent: Commissioners: Garcia

Abstain: Commissioners: Choi and Lam

PUBLIC HEARING:

OLD BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

1-A. DETERMINATION OF CONSISTENCY OF THE MONTEREY PARK BICYCLE MASTER PLAN WITH THE CITY OF MONTEREY PARK GENERAL PLAN

The City of Monterey Park is the lead agency of a multi-jurisdiction project to adopt a regional San Gabriel Valley Bicycle Master Plan that includes bicycle plans for each of the 5 participating cities.

Public Works Director/Assistant City Manager Ron Bow provided a brief staff report.

Representative Javier Hernandez, Bike San Gabriel Valley Program Director, provided a PowerPoint presentation and was available for questions.

Commissioner Choi asked staff to elaborate on the different classes of bicycle infrastructure, the distinction between the three, and why one would be recommended over the other.

Representative Hernandez replied Class I is an off-street facility, like the river bike paths, where the road is not shared with vehicles. Class II is an on-street facility where there is a dedicated bike lane with two strips on each side. An enhanced Class II is a street that is wide enough to accommodate a bike lane and a buffer zone, whether it is a one foot, two feet, three feet buffer zone, or maybe even accommodate a protected bike lane.

Commissioner Choi inquired if the two-way cycle track on Pomona Boulevard is a Class II. Representative Hernandez replied that Potrero Grande is a Class II because the street is wide and has the capacity to accommodate a bike lane not having to sacrifice parking or a travel lane.

Commissioner Choi inquired if the road conditions were considered before the recommendations were placed into the different classes. Director Bow replied that the street and infrastructure will have to be repaired or replaced in order to accommodate the bike lanes and parking areas.

Chair Sullivan stated that a project came before the Commission and the Commission asked the developer about resurfacing Potrero Grande and in time installing bike lanes. He inquired if the Master Plan took into consideration new developments.

Director Bow replied that if the City wanted to collect fees to assist in developing the Bike Plan or enhancing the conditions of the street that would be the City's decision to negotiate with the developer. The Bike Plan was put together without any types of funding that may come from development. Once the plan is adopted and the City gets grants, developments fee, or the developer pays a portion of it that will be additional money to assist the City.

Chair Sullivan inquired about the date of the air quality study included the Bike Plan. Representative Hernandez replied every two years.

Chair Sullivan inquired about the bike lane widths since the City of Los Angeles is currently looking into correcting some existing bike lanes with varying widths. Representative Hernandez replied that the Bike Plan is not looking at any bike lanes in particular. When the City determines to move forward and implement the recommendations in the Bike Plan, further analysis will be required as to what will be feasible. The photos in the Bike Plan are recommendations.

Chair Sullivan inquired if the information was available in multiple languages during the community outreach. Representative Hernandez replied the information was available in English, Spanish and Chinese. There were four volunteers from the City of Monterey Park that assisted with the Chinese translation.

Commissioner Hamner stated that this is a policy document and there are internal local agency approvals for how the Plan will be implemented. He inquired of Director Bow if there are any priorities in the City. He was wondering about the connectivity; Monterey Park is sort of an island. He inquired about the Plan's impacts on the major arterials.

Director Bow replied that the priority begins with the goals that are easily achievable and which do not require a lot of effort, such as signage or paint on the ground, and not in any particular areas. Representative Hernandez added that one of the goals is to make sure the Plan is consistent with other master bicycle plans in the surrounding areas, such as Los Angeles County and the City of Los Angeles.

Commissioner Choi inquired about the City of Rosemead. Representative Hernandez replied that the City of Rosemead and the City of Temple City have already approved a bicycle master plan. Those plans were incorporated into the Master Bicycle Plan, but they could not be altered. Rosemead Boulevard is an example of an enhanced Class II bike lane. There is street art, enhanced lighting, improved sidewalks, 400 trees, and bio swales. There is 5-foot bike lane with a 3-foot protected barrier that also serves as a bio swale.

Chair Sullivan opened the public hearing.

Director Huntley read into the record two correspondences. The first is an email from Kyle that supports the Master Plan. The second is a support letter from the City's Environmental Commission.

Speaker David Barron, 306 East Newmark Avenue, expressed his main concern is safety. People who bicycle in Monterey Park bicycle for necessity.

Speaker Vincent Chang, President of Bike SGV, this Plan is for the future of the City to be able to ride in a safe manner. In other parts of the world people are already traveling by bicycle as a part of life.

Speaker Terry Dewolf, 1142 Kenton Drive, stated that he is proud to be a member of Bike SGV. He suggested that a Class II be provided for Potrero Grande Drive and Hellman Avenue.

Speaker Efren Moreno, 1712 West Ramona Road, Alhambra, Vice President of Bike SGV, stated that there are three reasons to support the Master Plan. The first reason is economics. There are cities that have instituted bike plans in their commercial areas and they have prospered. There is less likelihood of seeing stores when driving. When people are able to walk or bike through an area they are more likely to stop. The second reason is health. Adopting the Plan will make it safer for people to bike and be more active. Through implementation and education people can be encouraged to do small errands on their bikes. The third reason is safety. With no infrastructure the likelihood of an accident is greater.

Speaker Albert Chao, 1845 South California Street, San Gabriel, stated that it will be a great bike route from San Gabriel to Monterey Park.

Speaker Andrew Yip, 2605 Charlotte Avenue, Rosemead, stated that he grew up in Monterey Park. This is a great opportunity to expand the infrastructure and to build upon what the City has, which is currently very little, and to encourage people to go after alternative modes of transportation such as busing, trains, biking and walking. There is a lack of bicycle parking and wayfinding signs, and some streets are not well lit.

Chair Sullivan closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Lam stated that it is important to make the city safer for bicyclists. Director Bow replied that one of the great things about the Master Plan is that it will allow the City go after grants for public outreach and safety awareness.

Commissioner Hamner stated that this is the beginning. Implementation will be important and the City has to be smart and thoughtful. Business versus accessibility versus different modes of transportation is an important balance.

Commissioner Choi stated that this Plan is a fine example of good regional planning. This will result in an increase in the number of walkers and bicyclists in the city. This will help to reduce traffic congestion and improve safety. This will encourage people to use alternate modes of transportation. The plan will help to advance the goals in the General Plan relative to mobility, recreation, and environmental sustainability.

Chair Sullivan stated that his comments mirror his colleagues, but expressed concerns relative to the 710 Freeway Extension Coalition. He stated that if the tunnel project does not go through, traffic on Atlantic will be increased with high speed buses. The high volume of traffic on Atlantic Boulevard is concerning.

Commissioner Lam inquired about bike safety training classes. Representative Hernandez replied that Bike SGV was awarded a small grant last year by the Office of Transportation Safety through Metro to run a 3 hour safety class pilot program. There was one class in Monterey Park open to 12 residents and it was over-subscribed. It showed the level of demand for these types of classes specifically. The Bike Plan puts a strong focus on pedestrian safety education.

Action Taken: The Planning Commission after considering the evidence presented during the public hearing adopted **Resolution No. 13-14** recommending that the City Council adopt the San Gabriel Valley Regional Bicycle Master Planer.

Resolution No. 13-14, entitled:

A RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL ADOPT THE SAN GABRIEL VALLEY REGIONAL BICYCLE MASTER PLAN.

Motion: Moved by Commissioner Hamner and seconded by Commissioner Choi, motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: Commissioners: Sullivan, Hamner, Choi and Lam

Noes: Commissioners: None

Absent: Commissioners: Garcia

Abstain: Commissioners: None

1-B. CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT – 331 NORTH ATLANTIC BOULEVARD #202 (CU-14-07)

The applicant, Zhi Cheng Chen, is requesting approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow a commercial recreational facility at 331 North Atlantic Boulevard #202 in the R-S (Regional Specialty) Zone.

Commissioner Hamner inquired if the business plan was a city document because it has the City's seal. Planner Tewasart replied that it was produced by the applicant.

Commissioner Hamner stated that the business name is unfamiliar and confusing because a business name gives a sense of the business activity. He inquired about the economic value. He inquired about the structure of the corporation and where this type of business currently exists.

Planner Tewasart replied that a similar use came before the Planning Commission in 2013. The business is located a couple buildings south of this location. The proposed use was a very new concept and the applicant spent a great amount of time explaining and describing the use. The business is currently in operation. The premise of the business involves puzzle rooms to be solved by a group of 13 people approximately. Solving one puzzle room allows access into the next puzzle room. If the puzzle is not solved within a certain period of time the group is required to exit the room. No issues or complaints have come up with this business.

Chairperson Sullivan stated that he shared in Commissioner Hamner's concerns about comparing apples to apples. He had asked the Police Chief on the phone if there is a model that is used within law enforcement to compare uses. The Police Chief replied that the same thought process is applied to internet cafes that were popular in the 1990s. The Police Chief stated that there is a learning curve to it. Chair Sullivan also expressed concerns about the fire aspect of the business. He stated that he spoke to a fireman about this type of operation and inquired if there is an issue if the premise had to be vacated in a hurry and if there are enough doors. He stated that the fire conditions in the resolution are ambiguous.

Commissioner Hamner stated that there are mandated codes that come from the Building Standards Commission from the State down to the local agencies. The enforcement of that is not as malleable as the municipal code which can be interpreted. The exiting requirements based on occupant load and path of travel and conditions of elements getting to the public way are pretty standard. That will be pickup by building.

Chair Sullivan opened the public hearing.

Applicant Zhi Cheng Chen, 331 N Atlantic Boulevard #202, stated that Acescape Corporation provides indoor recreation. The business is a new business that started in Japan. This type of business can be found in New York, San Francisco, San Jose, Downtown Los Angeles, Rowland Heights and one in Monterey Park. The business is created for creative thinkers to escape the puzzle rooms. The purpose is to encourage people to think outside of the box. In terms of employment, the purpose is to provide employment opportunities.

Commissioner Lam inquired about the similar business in Monterey Park. Representative Chen replied the other business has been operating for the past three

months and was also approved with a conditional use permit. This type of business is popular with the younger multi-cultural community. This type of business is similar to a video game. It puts people physically into a story, to find the clues and escape the rooms.

Commissioner Hamner stated that he sensed the sincerity. He inquired for clarification about the sales tax. Applicant Chen replied that his major is finances and sales tax meaning the service that will be provided.

Commissioner Hamner stated that liked the idea of the collaborative nature and critical thinking of the business, but it is a recreation not necessarily a good business element for this location. He expressed his concern about whether or not the use meets the intent of the general plan and the commercial zone. He thinks the space is underutilized.

Director Huntley stated that this an entertainment use. Unfortunately there isn't a response for the type of revenue it will generate. This is not a ground floor tenant space, this is the second floor and usually a second floor tenant would be an office use. The difference in revenue between a professional office use versus an entertainment use may be negligible.

Chair Sullivan inquired if the applicant plans on selling alcoholic beverages. Applicant Chen replied no. Food will not be allowed in the game rooms.

Speaker Jason Song, stated he is a co-founder of Acescape. He stated that this type of business has been in the United States for a long time. The expectation is that the business will generate money. They anticipate 90 percent capacity on the weekends and 50 percent capacity on the weekdays. Whenever they go on-line to book tickets to the other existing businesses it is always full. There is no availability for the same day or the next day. Mostly likely you have to book one week ahead. They want to provide a team building opportunity for people to come and play together for schools, parties, and companies. This business provides the physical interaction. For the safety issues, the front door will always be open. People pretend to be locked in the room. All the rooms will have video cameras and training will be provided when people first go into the rooms to ensure the safety.

Speaker Lihang Zhao, stated that he also a co-founder of Acescape. He stated that the business is in-line with the goal of bringing different types of uses to the Atlantic Gateway area. This type of business brings variety to the City. He clarified that people will be asked if they want to play the puzzle with different groups and if they say no then they are not forced to play.

Commissioner Hamner inquired about the number of people that can be in each theme at a time. Speaker Zhao replied that each theme will allow a maximum of 6 people.

Commissioner Hamner inquired about adequate space for people waiting to play the game rooms. Speaker Zhao replied that similar to a movie, people pre-book their tickets, so they know when their start times. People will avoid trying to come too early.

Commissioner Hamner inquired about cross positive relationships with the other businesses in the building. Speaker Zhao replied that the business does not provide food and beverages, so it opens up opportunities for the nearby restaurants.

Chair Sullivan closed the public hearing.

Action Taken: The Planning Commission after considering the evidence presented during the public hearing adopted **Resolution No. 14-14** approving conditional use permit (CU-14-07) to allow a commercial recreational facility at 331 North Atlantic Boulevard #202.

Resolution No. 14-14, entitled:

A RESOLUTION APPROVING CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (CU-14-07) TO ALLOW A COMMERCIAL RECREATIONAL FACILITY ON THE FIRST FLOOR OF AN EXISTING COMMERCIAL BUILDING AT 331 NORTH ATLANTIC BOULEVARD #202.

Motion: Moved by Commissioner Choi and seconded by Commissioner Sullivan, motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: Commissioners: Sullivan, Hamner, Choi and Lam

Noes: Commissioners: None

Absent: Commissioners: Garcia

Abstain: Commissioners: None

ITEMS FROM COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

None.

ITEMS FROM THE COMMISSION:

None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for consideration, the meeting was adjourned on November 25, 2014 at 9:00 p.m. to the next regular meeting on December 9, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

Michael A. Huntley
Director of Community and Economic Development

Approved on at the regular Planning Commission meeting.