



City of Sacramento Development Oversight Commission

Community Workshop Questions and Answers September 10, 2007

During its regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, September 10, the City of Sacramento Development Oversight Commission held a special community workshop at which members of the community were encouraged to submit their questions and comments about the development process. The intent of the workshop was to provide an open and dynamic dialogue between members of the commission, City staff, community members and developers about the development process in Sacramento. The following questions and answers were discussed during the meeting. Questions are in bold, and the respective answers are listed below each question.

The City of Sacramento Development Services Department talks a lot about streamlining. What does this mean?

When we talk about “streamlining”, it means providing an answer to a customer or a member of the public as quickly and efficiently as possible, even if the answer is “no”. Streamlining does not mean cutting corners or skipping key parts of the development process to get something done.

Does the DOC see the need to further limit public involvement and if so, what are the reasons?

The DOC does not want to limit public involvement in the development process. Rather, the DOC would like to see much great public involvement, but earlier in the process. Getting constructive feedback earlier on in the process enables us to create projects that have everyone’s buy-in and that create a better community for all of us.

Does the removal of appeal rights lessen the public’s voice in the early notification process?

This question is specific to a proposal to establish a process for the Railyards projects which proposes that, once the Railyards Specific Plan is entitled, future Railyards projects would be approved by the Planning Director. By nature, this would eliminate the third party appeal, but the opportunity for the Council and Mayor to call up the project would remain, thus still allowing an opportunity for a project to be heard in a public forum if there are concerns. This proposed process is still under development and will be presented to the City Council this fall.

Regarding the changes for Railyards and Township 9, is this going to be the new standard for all large projects?

The Railyards and Township 9 are projects that are truly city shaping in their nature, and will allow for significant development of major infill sites. Because of the significance of these projects, the city determined that a special process would be appropriate to ensure these projects can successfully move forward. T-9 is a PUD (Planned Unit Development) in a Design District and will go through the Planning Director Plan



City of Sacramento Development Oversight Commission

Review (PDPR) process with no public hearing. When an application comes in, the city will ensure that the applicant meets with the community first in the form of a pre-application meeting before going through the Planning Director Plan Review process. Projects that are submitted for this process must be compliant with the PUD/SPD (Special Planning District) guidelines to go forward. This prevents projects from unnecessarily having to go to the Planning Commission level when they can be resolved at the staff level. As previously mentioned, however, even if a project does not go to the commission level for approval, the Mayor and Council still have the right to call up a project for their review if they have concerns.

We need to ensure there is a vehicle for the community to voice their concerns. How can you ensure that the public has access to project information?

The Development Services Department places project information online, from application to completion. In addition to project-specific Web sites for larger-scale projects such as the Railyards, there are various reports on the DSD home page listing active development projects. In addition, all Commission agendas and staff reports are available online. We also provide online tools such as OneVoice (which is a message board for community comment and involvement) and "Citizen Access," which allows members of the community to view the status of development projects by address. All of these tools are available at www.cityofsacramento.org.

Do we adhere to a standard level of performance and notification?

All projects are noticed the same way, from small garages to large projects. The standard noticing procedure is to send a notice to the residents within 500 feet radius of the project, 10 days prior to the public hearing.

What is the status of the City's Green Building Program?

As part of the City's Sustainability Agenda, the Development Services Department has establishing a Green Building Program. Currently, we are meeting with various contractors and industry groups to tell them about the program and determine what green building incentives might be attractive to them. In addition, Jamie Cutlip, who is a planner with the DSD, is currently in a "rotational assignment" as the project coordinator for Green Building. She is researching green building programs in other jurisdictions and putting together a program for the City, as well as coming up with incentives to make it viable. The Green Building Program will come back to the DOC on November 5th with some draft guidelines.

What is happening with the pre-approved Infill House Plan program?

Currently, there are two different plans available for infill model homes. Eight projects are under construction and two have already been completed. The city is working to modify the existing plans to fit odd size lots, as well as allow for lower construction costs. There is also a need for greater publicity about the plans available. To provide that, DSD is offering a rotational assignment opportunity for someone currently on staff to continue enhancing the program and market the plans to the community. For more information about the infill model homes, please visit www.cityofsacramento.org/dsd/planning/InfillHousePlans.cfm.



City of Sacramento Development Oversight Commission

How is the current market affecting the City? Will it affect the move to 300 Richards Blvd?

The number of entitlement applications throughout the past year is actually higher than in previous years, so our staff is remaining busy with those projects. Construction valuations are significantly down, however, which is affecting our department in terms of budget. The market is expected to continue at this rate in early 2010 or even as soon as 2009. The current market is not affecting our plans to move to 300 Richards Boulevard. We are still on track to take occupancy in early 2008, with the 3rd floor and permit counter moving in sometime in January and the 2nd floor staff moving in after that.

There seems to be a conflict of the Preservation of Historic resources and high-density Infill development. In the proposed General Plan, will there be incentives for developers to remove existing historic housing stock in order to put higher-density infill development in its place?

This was well discussed at a recent Preservation Commission meeting. There is language in the City Codes to protect historic resources and discourage "demolition by neglect." City staff has promised to revisit the Code and see if the language needs strengthening. We will also work with Code Enforcement and make sure there are incentives in place to protect those properties. We will continue to work with the preservation community to ensure their concerns are heard and considered.