



Northwest San Pedro Neighborhood Council

"Your Community Voice"

July 9, 2008

Los Angeles Planning Department
200 N. Spring Street, Room 621
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: CPC 2006-8043-GPA-ZC-SP-DA

Dan Dixon
President

John Mavar
Vice President

Sanni Wehbe
Treasurer

Mary Hamlin
Secretary

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the application of BDC Ponte Vista Partners LLC (developers) for a General Plan Amendment to change the designation on 26900 South Western from "Low Residential" and "Open Space" to "Medium" density residential land use, the establishment of the Ponte Vista at San Pedro Specific Plan and Zone Change to a Specific Plan Zone, and a Development Agreement with the City. The application should be rejected.

The project falls within the boundaries of the Northwest San Pedro Neighborhood Council. We represent approximately 20,000 residents and numerous businesses and community organizations with. Our community and our Board have been following plans for this property since it was first advertised for sale by the Navy. Members of our Council have participated in numerous workshops and meetings regarding this project, including participation on Councilwoman Hahn's Community Advisory Committee.

BDC's proposal to build a 1,950 unit residential project represents a **four to eight percent increase in the population of San Pedro** which would be "accommodated" **on less than one percent of San Pedro's land area.** By the Applicant's own recalculated numbers, this population rise would increase average daily traffic by 28% on Western Avenue, one of the most overburdened stretches of public roadway in the region. In reality,, his project could increase traffic by as much as 80%.

To assist us in analyzing the impacts of the proposed project on our community, we contracted with experts in the areas of population and transportation. We reviewed their findings and used them in this analysis. Their reports are detailed on our website, www.nwsanpedro.org. To gauge community sentiment, we conducted a survey about the proposed project, and other matters, as part of our regular outreach to the approximately 9,000 households in Northwest San Pedro. We received 680 responses, of which fewer than 4% indicated that they "support the developer's proposal for 2,300 condominiums" (the number being considered at the time of our survey), 72% wanted to maintain the existing zoning, and 21% said they might consider "some additional homes" in exchange for specific mitigation measures. The remainder wanted more information.

After much study and discussion, our Council concluded that the current R-1 zoning of this property fits well in the community and is appropriate zoning. The density requested by the developer fundamentally alters, for all time, the nature of the immediate neighborhood and the entire north side of San Pedro.

One of the most frustrating aspects of the proposed “Specific Plan” is its lack of specificity. It is impossible to tell what is actually proposed-- how many of each size unit for example--so that it is difficult to determine what population, student generation rate, trip generation rates, and economic impacts should be considered. We therefore believe that the Planning Department should require the developer to be more specific on these issues and that the EIR should be redone to outline the impacts of what is actually proposed.

We previously submitted comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), a copy of which is attached hereto. The concerns raised in our comments on the DEIR are the same concerns that we have regarding the request to amend the community plan and subdivide the property. Although our council has not had adequate time to review the recently released FEIR, the reduction in the number of proposed units to 1,950 and the increase in the proportion of senior housing do not significantly alter our concerns. We request that the Planning Department consider our previous and current comments as comments on the proposed Specific Plan and Zone Change Request.

Our concerns relate mostly to traffic, population, housing, and economic impact. Because the analysis in the EIR is built on faulty assumptions, it is in effect a “house of cards,” and all conclusions based on the analysis are also faulty. Among the fundamental deficiencies are the following:

- The project description lacks sufficient specificity to adequately evaluate the environmental impacts and to be considered a “specific plan”.
- Although the developer has increased the trip generator rate to 5.86 trips per household, this still significantly under-reports the traffic impacts. This rate is inconsistent with the testimony of Gail Goldberg before the City Council that “Los Angeles is different. We have a unique development pattern....A typical household makes 10 vehicle trips per day.” Further, ITE range for the average trips per day extends all the way to 11.79 trips. The applicant offers no analysis whatsoever to justify using the average. There are no amenities in the project to justify using any rate lower than the high end of the range.
- The number of persons projected per household significantly underestimates the projected population resulting in an underestimate of the traffic and environmental impacts as well as the costs for City services. The failure of the developer to state the specific bedroom count virtually guarantees an undercount.
- The impact on schools is miscalculated because the developer used the wrong data to determine current student enrollment and the student generation rate of one student per 15 units is too low. The number of students per household in the surrounding area is 6 per 15 units.
- The proposed project is in the Wilmington-Harbor City Community Planning Area. It is inconsistent with the Wilmington-Harbor City Community Plan and with SCAG’s Compass Growth Vision Principles.

- The assumptions about the driving habits and household size of “seniors” 55 years and older are outdated and inaccurate. The assumption of about two trips per day vastly underestimates the impact of their active lifestyle.
- The economic impacts projected in the report based on purchasing of goods and services overstate the revenue to the City of Los Angeles since the majority of goods and services will be purchased at stores located outside of the City boundaries.
- The proposed project will have an adverse impact on the development of downtown San Pedro. Condos proposed for the Ponte Vista site will compete with the sales of homes in downtown, the area where the community has agreed that density should be concentrated, thus adding to “community sprawl”. The City should not undermine the work of its own Community Redevelopment Agency in trying to renovate the central core of San Pedro.

The developer has been quoting from a report prepared by Priority One Engineering for our Neighborhood Council. The report being circulated by the developer was an initial draft. The final report is attached hereto. This report suggests that the procedures used by the City’s Department of Transportation for Ponte Vista are out of date. By using studies from less automobile-dependent communities, BDC underestimates the real traffic impact of the development on the surrounding community. Specific findings in this report included the following:

- “Consider requiring the developer to perform a local trip generation data collection to determine the most accurate trip generation rates to be utilized for the project.”
- “Reject the developer’s use of installation of the ATSAC/ATCS as mitigation....The LADOT has already committed to funding installation of the ATSAC/ATCS system at these locations. Allowing these mitigations will deprive the community of additional mitigations to which it is entitled. The developer should be required to install ‘alternate mitigations’ other than (sic) installation of the ATSAC/ATCS system.”
- “Some mitigation(s) are under the jurisdiction of other agencies, CALTRANS or other municipalities....Their acceptance must be provided prior to implementation of the project.”

Since the DEIR comments were submitted a number of additional factors have come to our attention.

- Funding for the City of Los Angeles ATSAC system (which was recommended by the Western Avenue Task Force to deal with the ambient growth PRIOR to any consideration of this project) is already in place. Any money that the developer pays for this system will not do anything to mitigate the additional traffic generated by it.
- The traffic signals on the portion of Western Avenue which is under Caltrans Control have been recently approved. However, there are no provisions to connect them into the ATSAC system. Our Council recently asked Caltrans “What still needs to be done on Western Ave. in Rancho Palos Verdes/San Pedro to connect your traffic signal control

system with the City of Los Angeles' ATSAC system? Are there plans in place for doing this?" Here is their reply:

"Currently there is no plan to connect the Western Avenue portion, which runs on ATCS, owned and operated by Caltrans (from W. Summerland Ave. to 262nd St.) to the rest of Western Avenue run by LADOT. Such integration would require a global interagency agreement to integrate all of ATCS run signals by both agencies which is a significant undertaking but one that will remain under consideration. However, both agencies are using the intersection of Western Avenue and Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) as one of critical intersections that controls the adaptive functionality of both Western and PCH corridors in the effected (sic) signal operations system area. This means that, even though the two systems are not physically connected, the main factors dictating the adaptive traffic signals adjustments, such as demands on various approaches, are consistently factored in both systems. This will help ensure that both systems take into account the most critical real time demand information as part of the automated analysis that takes place to alter cycle length, splits and offsets on their corresponding ATCS operation towards reducing travel time and longer green bands on critical segments. This essentially provides for a virtual integration (based on common parameters defining the needed adjustments) of both systems. In addition, our signal engineers will continue to monitor the State operated signals and maintain a very close communication with LADOT signal operation engineers collocated in the same building towards solving congestion problems and other traffic management objectives."

- In its February 21, 2007 letter to the applicant, the City stated, "ATSAC may be accepted as a mitigation measure prior to the completion of the ATSAC project's final funding report at the option of LADOT". The ATSAC program has now been fully funded and LADOT, which should never have approved it as mitigation for this project in the first place, and has now lost its discretion to do so.
- The Port of Los Angeles has released the Final EIR on the TRAPAC facility, located on the corner of Harry Bridges and Figueroa. This EIR projects an increase in truck traffic of 1.8 million trucks per year of which 38% will use the 110 Freeway. This is in addition to the 1.5 million additional truck trips estimated for the China Shipping Expansion on N. Gaffey, of which approximately 50% can be anticipated to use the 110 Freeway, thus resulting in an increase of approximately 1.5 truck trips per year (13 a minute) on the 110. The proposed increase in traffic from Ponte Vista needs to be viewed in the context of these figures.
- Mary Star High School has now opened on the parcel adjacent to Ponte Vista and the route to the school goes through the Ponte Vista property. This 300 seat high school has had a significant impact on traffic during the beginning and end of the school day. Already cars coming south on Western Avenue bound for the school, frustrated with the length of time it takes to make a left turn into Ponte Vista, are going to the next intersection and making a U turn back onto Western. We can only imagine the impact that adding 1,950 units would have on this intersection!

- Developer has proposed as traffic mitigation “right turn deceleration lanes” at the driveways of a number of commercial centers along Western. While this is to be commended, it should be pointed out that several of the retail centers along Western are located in Rancho Palos Verdes, not the City of Los Angeles, and that at least one of the busiest driveways cannot be improved in this manner without moving or reconfiguring a McDonald’s Restaurant. Furthermore, right turn lanes ignore the most pressing issue, which is the delays caused in making LEFT turns off of Western at the many commercial driveways along the corridor.
- A new Marshall’s store opened this spring on Western Avenue at Caddington Ave., adding to the existing Western Ave. traffic.
- The developer’s proposal to fund a DASH bus is to be commended. However, its impact on traffic will probably be very limited due to the reluctance of people to utilize public transportation combined with the reality that it cannot travel to most of the places that residents shop, work, and go to school.
- In its recent series on traffic, the *Los Angeles Times* stated that “It turns out that meager fractions, added or subtracted, can make the system scream or purr.” This project could result in an increase in traffic of over 50%, a major fraction!

The housing market has cooled to the point where the number of local sales has dropped significantly over the last year. The condos built on the adjoining lot are now being leased because a sufficient number of buyers could not be found. 1,950 additional units, primarily condominiums, are not needed at the present time.

- The tract map has been filed requesting that this property be divided into 33 lots. This adds to concerns in the community that the developer may be planning to sell off the lots once the entitlements are obtained. If such a sale occurs, it will be even more difficult to guarantee the promises made to the community.
- An ordinance implementing SB1818 has been adopted by the City of Los Angeles raising the possibility that if the property is zoned for 1,950 units, up to 2,633 could be built. Alternately, if the number of units is reduced as a part of this approval process, the developer could use SB1818 to increase the number of units to the 2,300 units originally proposed in the FEIR.
- The Governor of California has declared a state water emergency.
- The developer proposes to convey six acres to the City as partial satisfaction of his required Quimby contribution. However, he has encumbered the parcel with a lease to a private group otherwise unassociated with the project, the Eastview Little League. This means that the rest of the San Pedro community will bear the burden of furnishing recreation facilities to the project residents, without contribution from the developer.

Finally, we are concerned about the scheduling of future public meetings regarding this project. We respectfully request that the Planning Department release their recommendations on this project at least 60 days prior to any further hearings on this proposal, including any consideration by the Regional Planning Commission or the City Planning Commission, so that the residents and the Neighborhood Council will have adequate time to review and respond to the proposed recommendations. Additionally we request clarification of the process and timeline for responding to the FEIR.

Attached to this letter please find the following documents which are incorporated into our comments on this matter: Comments of Northwest San Pedro Neighborhood Council on Ponte Vista Draft Environmental Impact Report (January 30 (2007), Motion Regarding the Impact of Ponte Vista on Schools (approved by the Northwest San Pedro Neighborhood Council on April 9, 2007), Northwest San Pedro Neighborhood Council Resolution Relating to Ponte Vista (July 18, 2007), Final Traffic Study Review, Ponte Vista Residential Development Project (Priority One Engineering), and Demographic and Housing Analysis on the Proposed Ponte Vista Development (Julie Park).

Thank you for this opportunity to submit our comments and concerns. Please feel free to contact me at 310-259-2928 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Dan Dixon, President
Northwest San Pedro Neighborhood Council

Attachments

CC: Councilwoman Janice Hahn