



**OFFICIAL MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING OF  
THE PLANNING COMMISSION  
WEDNESDAY JULY 22, 2009, AT 6:15 P.M.  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, ROOM S249  
100 N. GARFIELD AVE., PASADENA, CA 91101**

1. **SITE TOUR 5:00 PM** – Met at 680 E. Colorado Blvd. – Tour commenced at 5:05 p.m.  
Attendees: McDonald, Persico, Wilson, Norton, Naber and Quirk

**REGULAR MEETING:**

2. **ROLL CALL** – Chair McDonald called the meeting to order at 6:17 p.m.  
**Present:** Persico, Wilson, Norton, Hall, Janisch, Naber, Quirk and McDonald
3. **PUBLIC COMMENT ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA** - none

4. **PUBLIC HEARING**

IDS Playhouse Plaza Project - 680 E. Colorado Blvd.  
John Steinmeyer, Current Planning

Following a public hearing, it is recommended that the Planning Commission recommend that the City Council:

1. Certify the Final Environmental Impact Report, adopt the Mitigation Monitoring Reporting Program, and approve the Findings of Fact with the Conditions of Approval;
2. Approve the Conditional Use Permit for a new non-residential project that exceeds 25,000 square feet
3. Approve the Minor Conditional Use Permit for a new project that exceeds 15,000 square feet in the Transit-Oriented District,
4. Approve the Minor Conditional Use Permit to establish a commercial parking use,
5. Approve the Adjustment Permit for four deviations from the Zoning Code, including building height, to exceed FAR in one FAR district, to not construct the building at the property lines on East Colorado Boulevard and S. El Molino Ave, and to reduce the required number of loading spaces from five to two
6. Approve Floor Area Ratio increase of 10 percent
7. Approve the Private Tree Removal Request

Staff acknowledged receiving correspondence providing testimony for the project via email from the following persons:

- o Pasadena Heritage
- o Marcia Nunnery
- o Kenneth S. McCormick
- o Joel Sheldon
- o Marcia V. Rood

**Consultants:**

Gene Watanabe, Cory Thomas, David Sack, Scott Jenkins, John Muggridge, Traffic consultant, and Jim Ravy

Public comment:

Todd Doney, real estate agent – Mentioned Pasadena is losing tenants and large companies. This proposed project is large enough that it accommodate today's tenants, it is on a main corridor in Colorado Blvd. and its got all the amenities that they are looking for when they are trying to find a location that would house their employees.

Erlinda Romo, Playhouse District Assn. –The EIR has addressed the issues that were brought up in a letter issued by the board, including a provision regarding traffic improvement and lights synchronization and a comprehensive signage program including signage for public parking component.

Sheldon Epps, Pasadena Playhouse Assn. – not present

Bill Ukropina, resident – In 2005 he was hired to lease the building that was on the site without success, in 2006 the property was put on the market for sale; received 24 offers and IDS was chosen. This project is going to bring about 500 or 600 jobs in the community, it is going to bring 155 visitor parking spaces, feels the design is compatible with the district. He urges the Planning Commission to approve the project.

Kenneth McCormick, resident – Expressed his opposition to the project because of the traffic study. Expressed concern for the impact of a 155 car garage on a small street like El Molino. The City's policy do not require parking stalls that are characterized as public use parking stalls to be counted in a traffic study, the logic of that if you could demonstrate that all those cars that were using those new stalls were in fact already in the district in that particular area. It will have a significant impact on usage on El Molino. There are different counts as to how these intersections perform. EIR needs to be more comprehensive with regards to the parking issues.

Marsha Rood, resident – Expressed opposition for the project, feels the proposed project is too large, and it does not conform to the city's 20 year vision of this area as an active pedestrian area. Why is the project too large; In terms of design compatibility, it is visually incompatible with the size, scale and massing of the adjacent nearby buildings. It would overwhelm two of the most important historic building in the Playhouse districts; the Playhouse itself and the Arcade Building.

Susan Mossman, Pasadena Heritage – Referred to a letter submitted outlining in detail flaws that volunteers reviewing the document were able to identify. Pasadena Heritage feels there are areas that have not been adequately covered and analyzed. They object to the conclusions in the document. Pasadena Heritage is opposed to the project as proposed; feel it is too large, over scaled and it has impacts on historic resources that are not clearly identified and clearly addressed in the EIR. Said that repeatedly it was requested that alternatives for a smaller project be considered.

Terry Tornek, resident – He hoped the project might be revised, scaled down, to meet some of the concerns expressed by him and others but it didn't happen. Believes that the infrastructure cannot support this project; the level of service table that was referenced show projected levels of service at six intersections at levels D, or E which are not satisfactory or acceptable to the people of Pasadena. The 1,585 vehicle trips attributed to this project do not include the 155 public spaces and the issue is to evaluate the impacts of this big project on an already overloaded street network. 155 parking spaces are an evasion of the TOD reductions in permitted parking. If the developer wants more onsite parking for its project, at 3 spaces for 1,000 per office and 5 spaces for 1,000 for retail; we come up with 509 parking spaces, not the 367 that are permitted. He believes that the City cannot make the findings for the adjustment permit, the FAR increase or the conditional use permit. Urged the Commission to reject this ill conceived project and direct staff to rewrite the findings in a way that they more accurately reflects the actual impact that it would have on the city.

Commission comments:

Commissioner Wilson – Is the project economically viable with FAR increase, or is it simply more profitable? What is the public parking impact—does it make the project more viable or less viable? What is the City's goal regarding parking? What is pushing the project? Mid-block crossing is integral part of the project. There are issues with mid-block crossing and potential pedestrian problems. Expressed concerned about traffic, size and scale of the development. It is inconsistent with the current General Plan. The applicant should take another shot at designing the project.

Commissioner Naber – Requested copies of the tables of the financial analysis for the FAR increase. Certain different scenarios could be more profitable. The site plan will encourage mid-block crossing and was shown in illustrations and this is a potential impact that should be studied; EIR should study that. Inadequate EIR because of that possible impact. El Molino is a de-emphasized street; concerns about bending of the rules about adding traffic. The ingress and egress of the garage will add traffic to the street and is inconsistent with the de-emphasized street. The building is incompatible with the specific plan in terms of massing. Other alternatives are needed: 50% or 75% project. The Findings economic feasibility can't be made now because the financial analysis is out of date and market conditions have changed. The study doesn't match the alternatives in the EIR. Many findings cannot be made. Statement of Overriding Considerations cannot be made. EIR should not be certified.

Commissioner McDonald – Questioned the assumptions made in the financial analysis. Other off-site parking alternatives should be studied. There are valuable lessons to be learned from Montana 1 & 2 projects. The Commission needs to make positive and reasonable recommendations to the Council. Need to present the Council with alternatives and options.

Commissioner Persico – What kind of environmental evaluation should be done for a new parking structure? Questions about public parking and commercial parking. The findings for approval cannot be made, more specifically—CUP finding—compatible with existing uses, scale, etc. The existing zoning regulations might not even produce a project that could be supported. The TOD findings cannot be made. MCUP findings for commercial parking cannot be made. How do you police distribution of public parking and separate parking for the tenants of the project? The concept of a paseo is a key feature in relation to the required findings, but the paseo doesn't really function as a paseo. EIR needs to look at a project with a description that includes a true connection/crosswalk to the Playhouse.

Commissioner Norton – Requested clarification of the term of “economic viability.” The project is not economically viable; and not our job to preserve the price the developer paid for the project. The EIR ignores cumulative impacts. Pedestrian traffic across the street causes a potential impact that should be included in the EIR. Mitigation measures can be required that are directly related to the impacts of the project that are created in the immediate vicinity of the site.

Commissioner Janisch – Does not agree with the EIR conclusion that there is no aesthetic impact regarding height and massing. The building envelope is too big. More traffic analysis is required. Public parking supply should be spread throughout the district. The public parking is circumventing the TOD requirements. The site should be evaluated for true public-public parking. Other off-site solutions for public parking need to be explored. Need to know cumulative parking and traffic impacts that exist now. The project does not meet the finding for approval and is inconsistent with the General Plan and Central District Specific Plan goals. The EIR traffic and parking analysis is flawed. Wants to use the EIR as a tool for planning/exercise.

Commissioner Hall – Findings can't be made. The project is too big for the area. It is inconsistent with other uses in the vicinity. What is the economic impact if project is scaled down?

Commissioner Quirk – The project does not meet the finding for approval and is inconsistent with the General Plan and Central District Specific Plan goals. The negative impacts of the design cannot be mitigated in Design Review after the building envelope is approved. One- and two-

story buildings in the vicinity need to be addressed in the design. The project does not complement the adjacent historic district. The parking study needs to be re-done. The financial feasibility study is inadequate.

**1st motion:**

Moved / seconded by Commissioners Naber and Persico to reject staff's recommendation.

**Vote:**

Yes: Persico, Wilson, Norton, Hall, Naber, Janisch, Quirk, and McDonald

Noes: none

Abstain: none

Absent: none

No opposition, the motion was approved 8-0.

**2nd motion:**

Moved / seconded by Commissioners Wilson and Quirk to recommend to the Council that whatever is built at that site give due importance to the location and the adjacent and surrounding historical building recognizing the importance of the Playhouse District and the need for a quality project there to support the Playhouse District and that whatever is build there does not exceed 145,000 square feet permitted under the specific plan not include public parking, adequately study traffic and pedestrian safety issues and be consist with the plan that has already been enacted as part of the specific plan and be consistent with the deemphasized street provision in the General Plan by putting the massing of the project on the corner of Colorado and El Molino as required under those plans.

**Vote:**

Yes: Persico, Wilson, Hall, Quirk, and McDonald

Noes: Norton, Naber and Janisch

Abstain: none

Absent: none

The motion was approved 5-3.

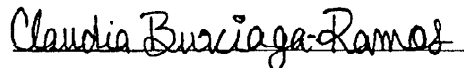
**5. COMMENTS AND REPORTS FROM STAFF - none**

**6. COMMENTS AND REPORTS FROM COMMISSION**

**7. REPORTS AND COMMENTS FROM COMMITTEES**

- **Design Commission** – Commissioner Norton- No report
- **Board of Zoning Appeals** – Commissioners Quirk, Naber, Hall, Persico, and Wilson –  
TR2009-00152: 3839 Mayfair drive – Tree removal: requesting the removal of one ficus macrophylla located in the rear yard setback. Staff recommendation: Denied approval. The BZA voted to overturn staff's recommendation and continue the hearing to September 23, 2009 special meeting.
- **CIP Subcommittee** – Commissioner Janisch – No report
- **Open Space Committee** – Commissioner Janisch – Met on Monday night, started working on the principles of the Open Space Plan.
- **General Plan Update Committee** – Commissioners Naber and Hall – No report.

**8. ADJOURNMENT** – Chair McDonald adjourned the meeting at 11:57 p.m.



Claudia Burciaga-Ramos  
Recording Secretary