



Monday, November 3, 2014

A regular meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order by Chairperson Garcia at 6:00 p.m., in the City Hall Council Chambers, 6615 Passons Boulevard, Pico Rivera, CA.

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Benjamin A. Martinez, Director  
Julia Gonzalez, Deputy Director  
Guille Nuñez, Senior Planner

**ROLL CALL:**

**PRESENT:** Commissioners Celiz, Elisaldez, Garcia, Gomez, Zermeno

**ABSENT:** None.

**FLAG SALUTE:** Led by Commissioner Elisaldez

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

October 20, 2014

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Elisaldez and seconded by Commissioner Celiz:

**AYES:** Celiz, Elisaldez, Garcia, Gomez, Zermeno

**NOES:** None

**ABSTAIN:** None

**ABSENT:** None

**PUBLIC HEARING:** PUBLIC HEARING - CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 716 AND ZONE RECLASSIFICATION NO. 316 – A REQUEST TO ALLOW THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN 81-ROOM, 43,700 SQUARE FOOT EXTENDED STAY HOTEL WITH SUBTERRANEAN PARKING AT 6605 ROSEMEAD BOULEVARD AND TO CHANGE THE ZONE CLASSIFICATION FOR SUCH PROPERTY FROM PROFESSIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE (P-A) TO GENERAL COMMERCIAL (C-G)

**Project Location:** 6605 Rosemead Boulevard  
Pico Rivera, CA 90660

**Applicant:** Aram Alajajian  
Alajajian/Marcoosi Architects. Inc.  
320 Arden Avenue, Suite 120  
Glendale, CA 91203

Senior Planner Guille Nuñez presented the public hearing. The proposal is to develop a vacant lot at 6605 Rosemead Boulevard into an extended stay hotel under the Candlewood Suites brand. The hotel is proposing to build 81 rooms ranging from 345 square feet to 612 square feet. The total floor area is 43,700 square feet for the entire four floor building and three subterranean levels of parking. The building is proposed to be 42 feet high with a modern contemporary architectural style.

This project was first introduced to the Planning Commission at the March 3, 2014 meeting. At that time, some residents and hoteliers presented a petition with 17 signatures opposing the project. Some of the concerns voiced were traffic impacts and parking, noise, types of clientele for the facility, and privacy of the residents.

The closest structure is 55 feet from the back of the hotel inclusive of a 35 foot buffer space between the hotel and the residential property lines. The architect is proposing to install mature landscaping.

The project will have 84 parking stalls which meets the parking requirements per the municipal code. Parking requires one parking per unit, plus parking for the office and lobby areas.

A traffic study was conducted that projected an increase of 2.5 percent along Rosemead Boulevard. The traffic impact report recommended right hand turns in and out only.

To address noise concerns, the conditions of approval include a requirement that all the air conditioning units meet the City's noise ordinance of sixty decibels. If there are any noise issues, the courtyard hours will be adjusted.

To address security issues, the applicant will install a video surveillance system in the driveway, the courtyard areas, and the lobby, and must be accessible to the Sheriff's station. The videos are required to be retained for a minimum of thirty days. A detailed security plan will also be submitted to the Sheriff's department for approval and must be done before the hotel's grand opening.

Staff prepared a mitigated negative declaration and find that any potential impacts can and will be mitigated. Therefore, staff is recommending approval and adoption of the mitigated negative declaration and mitigation monitoring, and also recommending approval of the conditional use permit and recommending that the Planning Commission recommend to the City Council to approve zone reclassification number 316. If the conditional use permit is approved by the Planning Commission, the zone

reclassification must be approved by the City Council.

Commissioner Elisaldez asked if the air conditioning units would be in-room air conditioners or window-mounted units.

Senior Planner Nuñez answered that the air conditioners would be window-mounted so that the occupants can turn them off when they are not being used and turn them on when they return to the room.

Chairperson Garcia asked where the 60 decibels is measured from.

Senior Planner Nuñez responded that the decibel reading is measured at the nearest residential property line.

Commissioner Gomez asked if the Angels Motel next door had outdoor air conditioning units.

Senior Planner Nuñez responded that she was uncertain of where their units are located.

There being no further questions, Chairperson Garcia opened the public hearing.

Consultant Nick Inzunza spoke on behalf of the Patel family, the developers, with regards to their experience in development, in the hospitality market and why they chose this location.

Aram Alajajian, project architect, thanked staff who worked on this project with the architects. Mr. Alajajian provided a brief overview of the design elements of the proposed hotel. He stated that the first floor will have the glass storefront, visible along Rosemead Boulevard. The air conditioning units will be screened and will blend in, not exposing anything outside. The interiors will be all natural wood colors and stone flooring. Mr. Alajajian went through a slideshow and described how the hotel would look.

Rich Carlson, Regional Director of Development for IHG, Inter Continental Hotels Group, spoke on IHG. IHG is the largest hotel company in the world by number of rooms. Hilton and Marriott are the largest competitors to IHG.

The hotel rooms have an extended stay averaging 14 nights. 80% of the guests are business travel, and 20% are on leisure travel. Mr. Carlson went through a slideshow showing what the different hotels in different markets look like. The architectural design of the hotel buildings complement their surroundings, while the inside of the structure has prototype rooms.

The 'Cupboard' is a small convenience store found in all Candlewood Suites hotels.

Occupants can prepare foods in their rooms or use the outdoor grills.

The expectation is that this business will draw from a wider radius to the surrounding cities, for sales, physicians from the Presbyterian hospital, and various industrial areas nearby. The market and the site are appropriate for the community. The ownership group has done a great job in guest satisfaction as well as in financial strength.

Mr. Raj Patel with R3 Real Estate Developers stated he grew up in Downey, and has seen the growth in Pico Rivera and believes in the City. This high name hotel will service the local businesses. This high quality hotel is quality controlled every quarter and a weekly update for the employees. This hotel will benefit the local economy. Most of the hotels employees will be residents from the City of Pico Rivera.

Chairperson Garcia asked if there were any questions for the applicants.

Commissioner Gomez asked if the various cities that the hotels are currently in are similar in size to Pico Rivera.

Mr. Patel responded that they had a project in La Puente, which is similar in size and that hotel has been a success, as well as North Hollywood.

Commissioner Gomez asked how long the hotel has been in La Puente.

Mr. Patel responded the hotel has been in La Puente for four years.

Commissioner Elisaldez asked if someone could speak in depth on the security of the hotel.

Mr. Patel stated that this hotel is an interior corridor hotel. There are no stairs located outside. All doors have electronic key cards, including the front door, which guests will need to swipe in order to open past certain hours. The security cameras have the tapes for about thirty days. The hotel is staffed 24 hours, with a security patrol. If security patrol is not enough, the hotel chain will have a night security guard, whatever is needed to ensure safety.

Chairperon Garcia asked how you enter the parking garage, as well as what lighting or surveillance cameras are near the parking entrance.

Mr. Patel responded that they have high quality color cameras that can read the license plates of the cars coming in. If they are guests, they can swipe their key, and they can get to the floor in which there room is located, and if they do not have a key, they can only get to the lobby area. The elevator is located in the parking area.

Commissioner Zermeno asked how the IHG Rewards program works.

Mr. Patel responded that there are over 83 million rewards members worldwide. The members earn points for every stay.

Commissioner Zermeno asked what percentage of the membership is anticipated to be coming into the City.

Mr. Patel responded that 60% of the hotel business will be pre-booked.

Commissioner Gomez asked how patrons would have access into the building.

Mr. Patel responded that the patrons would be able to enter through the front doors if the doors are locked after hours. The front desk staff has view of the door and can buzz the patrons in.

Mr. Alajajian stated that the design of the parking area is set up with parking at the street level of the driveway for guests. Elevator doors open at the level of the lobby so whoever enters the elevator will automatically stop at the lobby; staff at the registration desk will have a clear view of everyone who is exiting from the elevator. The floor planning of the hotel is conducive to safety.

Chairperson Garcia opened the public hearing for further comments.

City Attorney John Lam recommended segregating the comments between proponents and opponents.

The first group to speak were the speakers proposing the Candlewood Suites.

David Yoon, resident of 9050 Carron Drive #333, Pico Rivera, stated that he strongly recommended the Candlewood Suites, which would add revenue and create jobs that the City needs. Mr. Yoon states that as a competitor and property manager of a nearby complex, he and his staff will highly recommend Candlewood Suites to additional tenants. Mr. Yoon manages the apartment complex, California Villages, behind King Taco along Carron DriveS.

Commissioner Gomez asked how many employees they would be hiring and if they would be within Pico Rivera.

Mr. Patel responded that the hotel would have between 15 and 20 employees, and another 5 additional periodic employees, and most of these employees will be within the City.

Jose Medina, resident of 4318 Deland Avenue. Mr. Medina is the location manager at the Funeraria Del Angel Morrows, a nearby funeral home. Mr. Medina stated his business would be recommending the families that they service to the local Candlewood Suites.

Paola Portillo, resident of Downey, has firsthand seen the progress that Pico Rivera has made. Pico Park is a beautiful park to what it was years ago. Ms. Portillo is an employee of Jersey Mike's Subs and feels that this hotel is a great opportunity for the City and the residents.

Chairperson Garcia asked those individuals in opposition of the hotel to speak.

Howard Patel, whose family owns the Angels Motel, south of this project, spoke in opposition of the hotel. Mr. Patel stated that the air conditioners are loud and at the Angels Motel the air conditioners face inward. With this project, the air conditioners will be heard and will only get louder with time. Mr. Patel stated that there are over 200 rooms at the nearby motels: a Best Value Inn, the Angels Motel, and the Knights Inn. Mr. Patel does not feel that the City needs more rooms in the City. Mr. Patel would like to know how many Candlewood Suites are in Los Angeles County. Mr. Patel also brought up an issue with Pico Rivera Gardens and the safety of the patrons due to the panhandling in the area.

Arthur Castanon, resident of 6515 Manzanar Avenue, spoke in regards to the problems the residents have already with the Pico Rivera Gardens that is in his area. Mr. Castanon believes that the Candlewood Suites would bring in more people to the area and increase the panhandling problems.

Christina Griffin, resident of 6539 Guild Drive, asked when this project was addressed to the Planning Commission and if bids from other hotels are still being received. Ms. Griffin also spoke on the panhandlers throughout the mall area. Ms. Griffin is not sure if she is for or against this project. Ms. Griffin feels if there is no gate at the front of the parking structure, that the homeless will be going into the parking structure to sleep.

Tim Lin, manager for the Knights Inn, stated that he does not believe that anyone would want to stay at a hotel surrounded by motels and a liquor store. Mr. Lin has a concern if the applicant is building the hotel to sell to an investor or run it. At the rate the Candlewood Suites will be charging, no one will be paying that amount to stay in Pico Rivera. This is not a tourist area, and the hotel will eventually have to lower their rates to the nearby hotels rates and the hotels will eventually lose business.

Alice Aguilera, resident of 6543 Guild Drive, lives behind the proposed hotels location. Ms. Aguilera stated that she has not seen nice hotels around residential areas. Ms. Aguilera also addressed the problem with the residents of Pico Rivera Gardens and with panhandlers in general. Ms. Aguilera hopes the Planning Commission will take the nearby residents into consideration and their concerns for safety.

Yagnesh Bhakta, resident of 9118 Slauson Avenue, owner of the Rivera Inn, spoke on his concerns with the project. The hotels in the area are running at about 60 percent occupancy. Mr. Bhakta and the existing hoteliers will continue losing their business

when there is currently no demand for additional hotel rooms in the area.

Usha Patel, resident of Pico Rivera, owner of the Townhouse Motel, 4634 S. Rosemead Boulevard, open for almost 34 years spoke in opposition of the hotel. Customers cannot afford their 40 to 45 dollar rates, how will they be able to afford the higher rates from Candlewood Suites. Ms. Patel also feels the City should address the homeless increase in the City.

Philip Aguilera, resident of 6543 S. Guild Drive, spoke on the homeless issue in the City. Mr. Aguilera stated the panhandlers are harassing the younger residents of the City.

Henrietta Saavedra, whose mother Rose Franco, resides at 6522 Manzanar Avenue. Ms. Franco's property abuts the proposed hotel site. The rehab center residents look out the windows and stare down at the neighbor's backyards. Ms. Saavedra feels this site is not safe and will bring more crime to the area.

Arthur Cruz, resident of 6538 Manzanar Avenue, would like to know the timeframe of the construction. Mr. Cruz feels the City should address the issues with the rehab facility and the construction that will take place for the new hotel.

Reef Coleman, marketing director of Jersey Mike's Subs, believes that something to revamp the City might bring in more growth and higher value. Mr. Coleman feels the construction may also bring in more jobs.

Eric Moya, resident of 6532 Manzanar Avenue, spoke in opposition of this project. Ms. Moya lives behind the proposed site and feels the residents do not have any privacy. Ms. Moya does not see how this hotel would benefit the residents.

Mr. Carlson stated that the owner will answer some of the questions that were addressed by the residents, but none of the issues that were brought up will deter the applicants from coming to Pico Rivera.

Mr. Patel stated that the Gardens is a problem but hoteliers have dealt with similar problems. The Saharan Motel on Sunset Boulevard in West Hollywood had a residential facility move next door. The hotel hired additional security staff and spoke to the management to avoid issues.

Chairperson Garcia asked how long the construction was proposed to take.

Mr. Patel the construction should be completed between 9 to 12 months.

Chairperson Garcia asked if the developers are prepared to take the measures listed in the Environmental Impact Report.

Mr. Patel responded that they would comply with these measures.

Chairperson Garcia asked on the security on preventing homeless from entering the parking structures.

Mr. Patel stated that they would hire a security guard or additional staff to prevent the homeless from trespassing.

Commissioner Zermeno stated that he was disappointed in the remarks made in opposition of the project due to how they spoke about Pico Rivera. Commissioner Zermeno stated he is proud of this city and that the City does not have a homeless problem. There are homeless in the City, but there are panhandlers and homeless in every City.

At this time it was motioned to close the public hearing by Commissioner Celiz, seconded by Commissioner Gomez.

Motion carried by the following roll call vote:

<b>AYES:</b>	Celiz, Elisaldez, Garcia, Gomez, Zermeno
<b>NOES:</b>	None
<b>ABSTAIN:</b>	None
<b>ABSENT:</b>	None

Commissioner Zermeno addressed his disappointment with how the public was portraying the City in their comments. He indicated that they should be proud of their City, and not portray it as a crime-ridden or panhandling community nor should residents say that Pico Rivera is not good enough for a quality hotel. Instead we should focus on new opportunities for growth and look for ways to improve our community.

Commissioner Celiz addressed her concern with how the public was addressing the City. Commissioner Celiz has been a resident of the City since 1973. Commissioner Celiz stated everyone should be proud of the City and the growth of the City. Commissioner Celiz stated the growth is making our City a better place and what is best for the community. This project is an investment and we should be proud of the businesses coming to the City.

Commissioner Elisaldez believes this project is a great opportunity for the City and agrees with the other Commissioners that the residents should be proud of the City.

Commissioner Gomez also stated how the City has grown and improved. The structure will benefit the appearance of the area and better the community.

Chairperson Garcia stated that no one is guaranteeing anything. Chairperson Garcia stated that as long as people are willing to invest in our City, we as residents should

have a why not attitude rather than a fear of change. Chairperson Garcia was disappointed to hear of the vision of Pico Rivera.

Commissioner Elisaldez thanked the residents who came and spoke on the project for caring enough to show up to express their views.

Chairperson Garcia feels the issues brought up by the residents will be taken into consideration and heard by the applicants.

It was then motioned to approve the conditional use permit no. 716 and zone reclassification no. 316 by Commissioner Celiz, seconded by Commissioner Elisaldez.

Motion carried by the following roll call vote:

**AYES:** Celiz, Elisaldez, Garcia, Gomez, Zermeno  
**NOES:** None  
**ABSTAIN:** None  
**ABSENT:** None

**PUBLIC COMMENTS – NON-AGENDA ITEMS:** None.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Director Martinez stated that the Planning Commission meetings will be televised beginning in December.

Director Martinez also requested the Planning Commissioners attend the Shake, Rattle and Roll Business Expo on Wednesday, November 5, 2014 from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Deputy Director Gonzalez stated that the City Council Agendas are going digital and therefore, Deputy Director Gonzalez will be requesting signatures to digitize from the Chairperson and City Attorney.

**PLANNING COMMISSION REPORTS:**

PLANNING COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF Tuesday, October 28, 2014 – Commissioner Zermeno stated that the General Plan was approved by City Council.

PLANNING COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVE TO THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF Wednesday, November 12, 2014. Chairperson Garcia confirmed his attendance.

Chairperson Garcia thanked the Planning Department staff on their hard work on the public hearing report.

Commissioner Elisaldez thanked Planning Commissioners for taking a stand and approving this project.

There being no further business the Planning Commission meeting was adjourned at 7:58p.m.

---

Ruben L. Garcia, Chairperson

**ATTEST:**

---

Benjamin A. Martinez, Secretary  
Planning Commission  
Director of Community and Economic Development