

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT REPORT

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DATE: October 10, 2001

TO: Orange County Planning Commission

FROM: Planning & Development Services Department/Current Planning Services Division

SUBJECT: Public Hearing on Planning Application PA01-0031 for Site Development Permit

PROPOSAL: Construction of a 295,315 square feet commercial center on a 26.6-acre site in Planning Area 6 “Urban Activity Center” of the Ladera Planned Community. The proposal has 13 buildings and includes 275,300 square feet of general retail uses, 20,015 square feet of food/restaurant uses and a gas station. 1,557 parking stalls are proposed, which exceeds the minimum required number of parking spaces.

LOCATION: The Ladera Planned Community is located in southeastern Orange County, east of the City of Mission Viejo and northeasterly of the City of San Juan Capistrano. Planning Area 6 is located on the east side of Antonio Parkway south of Crown Valley Parkway. Fifth Supervisorial District.

APPLICANT: Rancho Mission Viejo, c/o DMB Ladera, LLC, property owner and developer
Westar Associates, property agent
Planning Solutions, Inc., Jay Bullock, entitlement agent

STAFF William V. Melton, Project Manager

CONTACT: Phone: (714) 834-2541 FAX: (714) 834-4652

SYNOPSIS: Current Planning Services Division recommends Planning Commission approval of PA01-0031 subject to the attached Findings and Conditions of Approval.

BACKGROUND:

On March 9, 1999, the Planning Commission approved Area Plan AP98-05 for Planning Area (PA) 6 of the Ladera PC (Planning Application PA98-0186). This Area Plan established 2 sub areas and general development guidelines for the 120 acre PA 6 “Urban Activity Center”. Sub-Area A (the subject site) was established as *Entertainment/Retail* uses with a maximum of 228,860 square feet of uses on 32.4 gross acres. Sub-Area B uses included *Mixed Use* (625,140 square feet of uses on 67.3 gross acres), a *Justice Center* overlay (up to 90,000 square feet on 26 gross acres), a *Community Facility* (square footage and acreage undetermined) and *Residential* (200 dwelling unit maximum on 20.3 gross acres).

The Planning Commission later amended area Plan AP98-05 on February 28, 2001 by Planning Application PA00-0137. The amendment included increasing the number of dwelling units in Sub-Area B from 200 to 232 (a corresponding reduction of 32 units in adjacent PA 3 was also approved) and the

deletion of the Justice Center use. PA00-0137 also included a Site Development Permit to allow for the construction of 232 multi-family dwelling units on a 10.4-acre site in the far southern portion of PA 6.

The current proposal is a request for Planning Commission approval of a site plan for the commercial development of a 26-acre site in Sub-Area A “Entertainment/Retail”. The project site is vacant and has been previously graded. The applicant proposes the construction of commercial center consisting of 13 buildings with 295,315 square feet of floor area and parking spaces for 1,557 vehicles. The breakdown of proposed uses is as follows:

- 275,300 square feet proposed for general retail use. Included in this total is an 8,000 square foot outdoor garden center and a service station with a 3,000 square feet building.
- 20,015 square feet is proposed for restaurant/food uses. Also included for parking calculation is 1,200 square feet of outdoor seating areas and an enclosed play area adjacent to a fast food building pad.

The proposed commercial center conforms to all development standards and parking standards. Planning Commission approval of this proposal is required because of previous findings and conditions related to building height applied to the approval of Area Plan AP89-05 for PA 6 and is discussed later in this report.

SURROUNDING LAND USE:

Direction	Planning Area	Land Use Designation	Existing Land Use
Project Site	6, Sub Area A	Urban Activity Center	Vacant, graded
North	1, Sub Area E	Residential	Vacant, graded, future senior housing (PA01-0067 has been submitted)
South	6, Sub Area B	Mixed Use, Residential	Vacant, graded, future office, apartments
East	Open Space	Ladera Land Conservancy	Permanent open space
West	3, Sub Area B	Retail Center, Residential	Future retail center site is currently used as construction offices. Apartments are under construction.

REFERRAL FOR COMMENT AND PUBLIC NOTICE:

A Notice of Hearing was mailed to all owners of record within 300 feet of the subject site. Additionally, a notice was posted at the site, at the 300 N. Flower Building and as required by established public hearing posting procedures. A copy of the planning application and a copy of the proposed site plan were distributed for review and comment to 12 County Divisions, the Orange County Fire Authority and the

City of San Juan Capistrano. As of the writing of this staff report, no comments raising issues with the project have been received from other County divisions by staff. No Comments were received from the City of San Juan Capistrano.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed project is covered by Final EIR 555, previously certified on October 17, 1995, and Addendum PA98-0186 previously certified on March 9, 1999 (Exhibit 2). Prior to project approval, the Planning Commission must find this EIR and Addendum adequate to satisfy the requirements of CEQA. Appendix A contains the required CEQA Finding.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

The proposed project meets all development standards of the Ladera PC applicable to Planning Area 6 and all parking standards (as discussed later in this report), and therefore might typically be approved administratively, or by the Zoning Administrator. However, Planning Application PA98-0186 for Area Plan AP98-05 in Planning Area 6 was approved March 9, 1999 and included Finding No.3, setting certain height standards. Finding No.3 reads as follows:

The Planning Commission finds and determines that the maximum height limit for Planning Area 6 of Ladera Planned Community is 60 feet maximum, with required stepped massing at the "urban edge" and a height limit of 35 feet immediately adjacent to residential uses on a separate building site. Whereas, pursuant to the approval of Area Plan 98-05 and specifically the height limit within Planning Area 6, the Planning Commission shall review all projects that exceed 35 feet in height within Planning Area 6.

Since building height for this proposal exceeds 35 feet, this site development permit must obtain Planning Commission approval. Specifically, the proposed 2-story, 93,000 square feet Building G has a ceiling height of 40 feet and a facade and pilasters up to 48 feet in height, totaling approximately 8% of the roof area. The majority of the other structures on site generally have a building height not exceeding 35 feet however, architectural design elements brings the total building height to 38 feet. The project site is not immediately adjacent to a residential use on a separate building site and therefore the Planning Commission is able to approve a height limit between 35 and 60 feet.

As explained in the applicant's Letter of Explanation (Exhibit 1):

The style of the Urban Activity Center (UAC) Retail project, in keeping with the uniqueness of Ladera Ranch, intends to bring visitors "back in time" one building at a time. The attempt is to create an "old downtown" ambiance, conducive to walking on wide sidewalks, with inviting hardscape conducive to browsing, sitting, sipping coffee, or window shopping, passing through facades that evoke the 20's, 30's and 40's, all in a uniquely American "Main Street USA" setting. Architectural features will be "wrapped" on three sides of the UAC Retail buildings, as seen from Crown Valley Parkway, Antonio Parkway and from the southerly sides UAC loop road. Materials will include brick (in various shades of aging), cornices and triglyphs of an art-

deco/streamline moderne concept, metal roofing and awnings as well as the ubiquitous old mission style treatments and hues, giving this development a unique appearance.

While the statement above reflects the sole conclusion of the applicant, staff agrees that the buildings are designed with a unifying architectural theme, and would appear to meet the Planning Commission’s concern regarding step massing of building height. Whether or not these building conform to any certain Ladera theme is up to the applicant and the developer to come to an agreement. Staff notes that there are no certain architectural guidelines for Planning Area 6 or any other planning area of the Ladera Planned Community. Architectural styles and themes are approved by DMB Ladera. The Planning Commission is not being requested to review the architectural styling. The Planning Commission is being asked to review and take action on the height of the structures proposed in excess of 35 feet.

Parking for this proposal is regulated by Section 7-9-145 “Off-street parking” of the Orange County Zoning Code. The parking requirements for this proposal is 1,553 standard parking stalls. The proposal provides for 1,557 parking stall. Additionally, all stalls, drive-aisles, and maneuvering areas conform to the applicable off-street parking standards. The table below summarizes the project's parking requirements and provisions:

**Table 1
PARKING SUMMARY**

Proposed Use	Building Number	Square Feet	Zoning Code Requirements Spaces/SF	Required Spaces	Proposed Spaces	Difference
Retail	A*, B, C, F, G, part of H (8,000 SF), I, J and M	267,300	1 per 200 SF	1,337	1,341	+4
	* outdoor garden center	8,000	1 per 500 SF	16	16	--
Restaurant/ Food	D, E, part of H (4,000 SF), K, L, and 1,200 SF outdoor seating area**	20,015	1 per 100 SF	200	200	--
TOTALS		295,315		1,553	1,557	+4

** Includes up to 600 SF of "dedicated" outdoor seating area for Building K

** Includes up to 600 SF of "dedicated" outdoor seating area for Building L

In addition to the parking, the circulation component of this proposal is consistent with the Master Access Plan for Planning Area 6, which has previously been reviewed and approved by PDSD (Traffic Review) and PFRD (Traffic Engineering). The UAC Retail site is served by five ingress/egress points, including (a) the primary fully signalized entry at the Antonio/Windmill (Terrace) intersection (2) a "left/right in, right out" from Antonio between Crown Valley and Windmill (Terrace), (3) a "right in" entry from

Antonio just south of Crown Valley, (4) a "right in" entry from Crown Valley Parkway just east of Antonio, and (5) a "right in, left out" entry at the terminus of Crown Valley Parkway.

Other aspects of the proposed UAC Retail project which are worth noting:

- A Lot Line Adjustment (LLA) has been submitted to PDSD Subdivision & Grading to increase the size of Lots 8 & 9 of Tract 16063 by less than 0.1 acres. This LLA would consequently reduce the size landscape (and fuel modification) Lot F of Tract 16063 by less than 0.1. The landscape and fuel modification lots easterly of the Urban Activity Center have been dedicated to the County of Orange as "scenic easements". Therefore, at the request of the Harbors, Beaches and Parks division, the applicant will be replacing this reduced "scenic preservation" area with an area of equal square footage elsewhere in Ladera Ranch, within a timeframe acceptable to the Manager of HBP.
- "Service parking" spaces have been located near several of the food buildings (Buildings D, E, K1 and K2) for loading and delivery parking. These spaces have been included in our total of provided parking, but will be specially marked for "service & delivery" parking only.
- Since precise plans are not being approved for all buildings, subsequent Site Development Permits will be required to be submitted for the fast food sites (Buildings K and L) and the service station site (Building M). The Director will approve these future Site Development Permits unless the buildings exceed 35 feet in height in which case the Planning Commission will be the approving authority.
- General locations for monument signage have been identified on the site plan for informational purposes only. A condition of approval requires a Sign Program prior to installation of permanent signs.
- Courtyard/restaurant seating areas have been included at two locations to provide for a common area for any visitor to the site. Since these areas are common and nonexclusive, parking is not required as is the exclusive parking for future restaurant pads K and L.
- The exact name and nature of the business to occupy Building A, designated by the applicant as "Major Retail", was not given to staff at the time of the preparation of this report. It was inferred though that the business proposed might include the use of shopping carts. Shopping cart return areas in the parking area and shopping cart storage areas at the front of the store were not indicated on the site plan. Condition of Approval No. 35 requires the applicant to submit a revised site plan showing the cart return lactations and to provide for screening of the shopping carts in they are stored in front of the store.

Staff would also like to point out that the landscaping plan included in the site plan package does not match the building configuration proposed. The buildings shown on the landscaping plan were an early submittal that was later replaced by the current proposal shown on sheet 1 of the site plan package. The landscaping plan is conceptual in nature and depicts the plant palette proposed. The major landscaping effort is in the parking areas and the site perimeter. Since these landscape areas in the early submittal are nearly identical to the final proposal, the applicant chose not to submit a revised landscaping plan. Condition of Approval No. 25 requires to the applicant to submit a detailed landscape plan corresponding

to the final approved site plan that includes landscaping in the parking areas to the south of Building A and at the rear of Buildings B through H.

CONCLUSION:

The project as currently submitted conforms to all site development standard. While the specific use of each retail and restaurant building is not known at this time, the parking provided is per Zoning Code requirements and is adequate to handle a wide range of uses. The building theme appears to conform to the Ladera concept of an "old downtown" ambiance. The building height and themed architectural features appears to enhance the ambiance. Staff supports the proposal and makes a recommendation as follows.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

PDSD/Current Planning Services Division recommends the Planning Commission:

- a. Receive staff presentation and public testimony as appropriate; and,
- b. Approve PA01-0031 for Site Development Permit subject to the attached findings and conditions of approval.

Respectfully submitted

George Britton, Manager
Current Planning Services Division

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APPENDICES:

- A. Recommended Findings
- B. Recommended Conditions of Approval

EXHIBITS:

- 1. Applicant's Letter of Explanation
- 2. Environmental Documentation
- 3. Arial photo and Site photos
- 4. Site Plans

APPEAL PROCEDURE:

Any interested person may appeal the decision of the Orange County Planning Commission on this permit to the Board of Supervisors within 15 calendar days of the decision upon submittal of required documents and a filing fee of \$760.00 filed at the Development Processing Center, 300 N. Flower St., Santa Ana. If you challenge the action taken on this proposal in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this report, or in written correspondence delivered to the Planning and Development Services Department.