

San Rafael Hills PRD Okayed

Glendale Planning Commissioners approved the MacDonald-Hensler Planned Residential Development zone request Tuesday night, but said they wanted more open space in the massive townhouse complex.

This is the essence of the unanimous decision of the commission which denied the request for an R-2 zone over the 304 acres of San Rafael Hills land, but approved the use of the PRD ordinance.

Explaining the decision to the crowd of slightly more than 300 persons at the lengthy meeting, Planning Director Gerald Jamriska said the action, if approved by City Council, would allow the builders to construct the complex, but would require 33 per cent more useable space than originally planned.

The open space could be

obtained, he said, by either reducing the number of units in the development or by increasing the amount of cutting and grading.

Arthur Jones, attorney for

the San Rafael Hills Property Owners Assn., a group opposed to the development, objected to the decision saying the commission would have to ask for a revised

plan of the development before the action is translated to City Council.

During the more than four-hour meeting in the non-air conditioned Wilson Junior

High School auditorium, Jones spent about 90 minutes presenting the homeowners' case against the development.

Through the use of many elaborate maps and photographs of the hills he alleged that the development would result in major hillside scarring.

Major ridge lines would be cut, he said, creating an undulating plain. Some canyons, he said, would be filled up to 200 feet. The development would, he said, be visible from many parts of the hills and the Verdugo Woodlands.

The developers, Scott and Gordon MacDonald and R. R. Hensler, are seeking a zone change from R-1 and R-1R to R-2-PRD.

The large audience was generally orderly throughout
—SAN RAFAELS, p. 4, sec. 1

—San Rafael

(Continued from Page 1)
the meeting. When the commission announced its decision, the homeowners applauded, thinking the entire request had been rejected. The clapping was replaced by angry cries when the decision was explained by Jamriska.

Commissioner Neal McClure, who introduced the motion to approve the PRD request, described the case as a "classic problem of balancing basic property interests with the right of a person to develop his own land."

Some of Jones' main objections to the development were that it violated the 1990's Open Space plan, the San Rafael Hills Citizen's Advisory report, the PRD ordinance and state law.

He said the developers would level over a mile of ridge line in opposition to the 1990's ordinance. He said the applicants were trying to maximize profits by building many units at the expense of the surrounding homeowners.

He said action on the matter should be postponed until a study could be made on the cost to the city to provide fire, police and other public services to the residents of the new development.

Merritt Dunlap, Chevy Chase resident and member of the San Rafael Hills Citizens' Advisory Committee, said the area will be overbuilt and he added that rice paddy type development is superior to the developers' plan.

William Brown, a Los Angeles police captain, said that

Glendale is one of the safest cities in the country. If the large development were to be built, the area could expect a rise in major crimes such as rape, homicide and burglary, due to the proposed high density population.

In rebutting the arguments attorney for the applicants Eugene Jack Potter said, "Many people seem to have the impression that within 24 hours there would be an increased need for power and water, etc."

He emphasized that the development would be constructed over a period of from 8 to 10 years and that increased demands for city services would be gradual.

The Planning Commission and Division, he said, would retain control over the development and could approve or deny any changes in the complex.

Prior to voting on the application all the commissioners voiced support for Jamriska. Mrs. Mary Jane Kidd said remarks by some persons criticizing the planning director were unwarranted. She said Jamriska is not serving any special interests.

Commission Chairman Sal Gangi said Jamriska is "a hard-working and dedicated public servant."

Other members of the commission, not previously mentioned, are Richard Garcia and Gerald Barrone.
—Mark Bacon

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