

7260 News, Spring 1998

Feuer Fights Century City Hi-Rise

Tract 7260—along with three other homeowner organizations—has appealed the recommendation of the Los Angeles Planning Commission to award a permit for the construction of a 38 story, 704,000 square foot building in Century City adjacent to Fox Hills Drive

Councilman Mike Feuer continues to work closely with 7260 and the other homeowners groups in his strong opposition to the project. Constellation Place. The Councilman's opposition is based on his concern that traffic generated by the hi-rise would gridlock many Westside intersections.

Artificial Intelligence

Feuer also does not believe that the proposed Adaptive Traffic Control System, which uses artificial intelligence to control traffic signals, will ease the traffic problems it is meant to solve. He wants to see ATCS tested before it is used.

Ed Ruzak, a nationally recognized traffic engineer hired by the home-owners groups opposed to the project, said that the proposed mitigations are based on the flawed and incomplete traffic study paid for by the building's Chicago developer, JMB, and originally submitted as part of its Environmental Impact Report. The traffic engineer said that the EIR's traffic distribution figures should have been subjected to computer modeling but were not.

Instead, those flawed, incomplete, and untested numbers from the EIR, according to Ruzak, were used by the Los Angeles Department of Transportation for its analysis of whether or not the ATCS computerized traffic signals would mitigate the traffic flow problems on the Westside.

Untested System

He added that as far as he could determine, ATCS relies on a system that is primarily used in single corridor or in non-residential areas such as city centers.

"Because little or no data exists on the effects that these systems have on residential areas, a test of the system is necessary," he said. The Planning Commission, however, after first leaning towards a test, rejected having one when LA DOT claimed a test was not needed.

Strange Developments

DOT'S approval of the mitigations is one of a series of strange developments in the JMB saga. • Both DOT and JMB refused to allow the public to see the new mitigations during the months it took DOT to analyze the mitigations. • DOT waited until five days before a Planning Commission public workshop held to discuss the project before releasing its analysis. This did not allow people time to study it in advance so that they could ask informed questions at the workshop.

The Commission should have rejected the application out of hand because the EIR submitted by JMB was incomplete. The Century City Specific Plan North required that the developer submit plans for an above or below ground pedestrian crossing at Constellation Place to connect the rise with the shopping center. No such plans were submitted. Instead, JMB asked for an exemption from the requirement and requested that it be allowed to get away with a surface level pedestrian walkway. What JMB now seeks would save the JMB money; it might also cost lives.

In addition, the Commission violated its own rules. The process limited it to a set number of days in which to consider JMB's permit application. Instead of abiding by its own deadlines, the Commission "froze time," when it exceeded those deadlines. • According to its own rules, the Commission should have moved the permit application to the City Council without making a recommendation. • Finally, by releasing its traffic mitigation analysis only a couple of weeks before the Commission hearing, DOT had not allowed project opponents sufficient time to study the new mitigation proposals, thus violating State EIR requirements.

Other Opponents

In addition to Tract No. 7260, Century Woods Condominiums, Cheviot Hills Homeowners, Country Club Estates, and the Manning Avenue Protective Committee also appealed the Planning Commission Constellation Place decision.