

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

DATE ISSUED:

October 2, 2007

REPORT NO. PC 07-126

ATTENTION:

Planning Commission

Agenda of October 18, 2007

SUBJECT:

General/Community Plan Amendment Initiation - 4300 University

Ave. -- Project No. 134760: Initiation of an amendment to the Progress

Guide and General Plan and the Mid-City Communities Plan to

redesignate a 2.75-acre site from Commercial and Mixed-Use (2.62 acres) with a maximum of 43 du/acre and Residential (0.13 acre) with 21-25

du/acre to Commercial and Mixed-Use with 73 du/acre.

OWNER/

APPLICANT:

City Heights Realty, LLC; City of San Diego Redevelopment Agency;

City Heights Square, L.P. Chelsea Investment Corporation; and La

Maestra Community Health Centers

REFERENCE:

Planning Commission Report No. PC-05-201 (City Heights Square

Planned Development Permit).

SUMMARY:

<u>Issue</u> – Should the Planning Commission INITIATE an amendment to the Progress Guide and General Plan and the Mid-City Communities pursuant to Municipal Code Section 122.0103? The proposed amendment would increase the designated density of a 2.75-acre site from 29 dwelling units per acre (with a mixed-use bonus of 43 dwelling units per acre) to 73 dwelling units per acre.

<u>Staff Recommendation</u> – INITIATE the plan amendment process.

Community Planning Group Recommendation – The City Heights Area Planning Committee voted to approve the general/community plan amendment initiation at their regularly scheduled and noticed meeting on October 1, 2007, by a vote of 14-4-0, the Chair not voting.

<u>Environmental Impact</u> – If initiated, the proposed plan amendment and future discretionary actions would be subject to environmental review.

Fiscal Impact - Processing costs would be paid by the applicant.



Housing Impact Statement – The Mid-City Communities Plan designates the 2.75-acre site as Commercial and Mixed-Use (2.62 acres) with a density of 29 dwelling units per acre and an available mixed-use bonus of 43 dwelling units per acre and Residential (0.13 acre) with a density of 21 to 25 dwelling units per acre (Attachment 1). Based on the existing designations, and assuming the application of the mixed-use bonus, 113 dwelling units would be allowed on the Commercial and Mixed-Use portion of the property and three units on the Residential portion, for a total of 116 units on the entire subject property. The sum of the permissible density has been absorbed by a senior housing project developed on a section of the site. The request to redesignate the subject property entirely to Commercial and Mixed-Use with a density of up to 73 dwelling units per acre would allow 201 dwelling units — a potential net increase of 85 residential units for the subject property.

This initiation request does not constitute an endorsement of the proposed project. If initiated, a staff recommendation would be developed once the project has been fully analyzed. Approval of this action would allow staff analysis to proceed.

BACKGROUND -

The subject property includes approximately 2.75 acres located at 4300 University Avenue between 43rd Street and Fairmount Avenue, on the north side of University Avenue. It is located within the City Heights Redevelopment Project Area and the Mid-City Communities Planning Area (Attachment 2). The subject property is surrounded predominately by commercial uses. Immediately northeast of the subject property are retail commercial uses and residential uses. To the south, there is a six-story office building and 134 town-home units, developed with assistance from the City's Redevelopment Agency. To the west, there is a church as well as residential uses; directly east are primarily commercial uses (Attachment 3).

The subject property is part of City Heights Square, a project site approved by a planned development permit [PDP] in June, 2005. As permitted, City Heights Square included senior housing, a medical clinic, a small recreation area, and a retail and office mixed-use space (Attachment 4). At present, a portion of the subject property is occupied by a fast food drive-through restaurant; there is also the recently completed City Heights Square 151-unit senior housing development and the medical clinic which will begin construction in November. The remaining land, approximately 1.7 acres, approved for retail and office mixed-use space is currently vacant (Attachment 5).

Due to market conditions, the applicant would like to pursue a mixed-use project that replaces the office use with residential, coupled with street-level retail. However, the maximum residential density permitted for City Heights Square has been allocated to the senior housing project. At the time the PDP was approved the owners/developers of City Heights Square did not have additional residential projects planned; the remaining land was entitled for the clinic, recreation, and mixed-use retail and office space. Therefore the density for the senior housing project was achieved by calculating the maximum dwelling units for the entire City Heights Square site (2.86 acres) as well as applying a 21 percent affordable housing density bonus. This effectively maximized the residential density permitted under the existing community plan land

use designations for the entire City Heights Square project site. For this reason, the applicant is requesting a plan amendment to increase the overall density of the original site, exclusive of the recreation area (Attachment 1). The proposed plan amendment would change the land use to Commercial and Mixed-Use with a permitted residential density up to 73 dwelling units per acre.

Changing the designations and increasing the density to 73 dwelling units per acre for the subject property would allow for 201 units which would be reduced by 116 existing senior units (the maximum units allowed by designation exclusive of the affordable housing density bonus), and ultimately result in 85 additional residential units that could be developed on the site. If initiated, an analysis of existing residential densities in relation to the proposed land use amendment and the potential impact to surrounding schools and parks would be analyzed as part of the general/community plan amendment process.

The site is currently zoned CU-2-3, which allows for commercial, mixed-use and multi-family residential development. If initiated, the proposed general/community plan amendment would be reviewed in conjunction with a request for a rezone and other required discretionary actions to be determined by the Development Services Department.

The City Heights Area Community Planning Committee voted 14-4-0 in favor of the general/community plan amendment initiation. Those opposed to the initiation expressed concerns regarding the land use change and the applicant's proposed project. The discussion included the applicant's intention to incorporate the community's input, the need for improved design, maintaining street-level retail, rental units versus for-sale units, and the safety of a high density residential use along a heavily trafficked street such as University Avenue.

Other General/Community Plan Amendments in Process

Currently there are no other general/community plan amendments in process within the Mid-City Communities Planning Area nor have there been any recent adopted amendments with the last year.

DISCUSSION

Before a general/community plan amendment can be initiated, Section 122.0104 of the Municipal Code requires that one of three "initial criteria" must be met or that all "supplemental criteria" be met as specified in the code.

The City Planning & Community Investment Department does not believe that any of the following initial criteria can be met:

- (1) The amendment is appropriate due to a mapping or textual error or omission made when the original land use plan or local coastal program was adopted or during subsequent amendments;
- (2) Denial of initiation would jeopardize the public health, safety or general welfare;

(3) The amendment is appropriate due to a material change in circumstances since the adoption of a land use plan or local coastal program whereby denial of initiation would result in a hardship to the applicant by denying any reasonable use of the subject property.

However, the City Planning & Community Investment Department finds that all the supplemental criteria can be met:

(1) The proposed land use plan amendment is consistent with the goals and objectives of the General Plan and the Mid-City Communities Plan.

The proposed land use amendment would fulfill the goals articulated in the General Plan pertaining to housing opportunities. The General Plan states that a steady level of housing starts should be maintained to assure continuing availability of all housing types and prices, and that the production of housing for first-time homebuyers should be encouraged. The proposed amendment would increase the residential density permitted for the site and thereby boost potential housing units and the subsequent opportunities for rental and/or ownership.

The proposed land use amendment would also satisfy the goals stated in the Residential Element of the Mid-City Communities Plan to concentrate new higher-density development along transportation corridors and enhance the quality of the local neighborhoods. The goals would be attained by allowing an increase in the potential dwelling units for the site, encouraging residential/retail mixed-use development along the commercial strip of University Avenue, and promoting new housing development in a variety of types and sizes to meet the needs of existing and future residents as well as expand homeownership opportunities.

The Commercial Element of the community plan further recommends that the area bounded by El Cajon Boulevard and University Avenue at Fairmount Avenue and 43rd Street be encouraged as a center of ethnically-oriented commercial activities with facilities such as restaurants and retail. The proposed Commercial and Mixed-Use designation would allow an opportunity for these types of uses to locate in this area. The land use designation requested by the applicant is the same as the existing Commercial and Mixed-Use designation located north of Fairmont Avenue along El Cajon Boulevard which allows a residential density of 73 dwelling units per acre.

The Economic Development Element of the community plan also identifies the area along University Avenue and Fairmount Avenue as a "smaller urban node" recommended for higher-density mixed-use development. The application of a Commercial and Mixed-Use designation with a higher permitted density would increase the vitality and combination of uses and help create a place where community members could interact.

(2) The proposed land use plan amendment appears to offer a public benefit to the community or City.

The proposed land use amendment would allow for the creation of additional housing for existing and future residents and benefit the community by providing safe, new housing stock.

The site is also located within the City Heights Redevelopment Project Area and would promote redevelopment and revitalization efforts in the surrounding area. Additionally, the proposed land use amendment would serve to provide some replacement housing within the City Heights area that was lost due to the siting and development of four new elementary schools in the community. As result of the construction of these new schools, a total of 637 housing units were removed from the existing City Heights housing inventory.

(3) Public services are available or are planned to be available to serve the proposed change in density or intensity of use.

Library, fire, and police services are currently in place and are provided by the City of San Diego. Police services in Mid-City are provided by the Mid-City Police Division and fire protection services would be provided by Fire Station 26, located approximately 2.26 miles from the site. Any development associated with the proposed land use amendment would have access to existing public water and sewer services located within the area.

If the amendment is initiated, impacts to public services and facilities would need to be analyzed to ensure that facility needs generated by the proposal would be addressed. In addition, a concurrent amendment to the Mid-City Public Facilities Financing Plan may be included.

(4) City staff is available to process the proposed land use plan amendment without any work being deferred on General Fund supported programs or ongoing plan updates.

Staff is available to process this amendment request without delaying General Fund programs or ongoing plan updates, as the City Planning & Community Investment Department's work program includes staff time for non-general fund development projects. However, delays in processing the plan amendment could occur based on staff levels and workload. The costs associated with processing this amendment, should it be approved, would be paid for by the applicant.

CONCLUSION

City Planning & Community Investment Department staff recommends that the amendment process be initiated to study the issues and impacts related to the proposed land use change from Commercial and Mixed-Use and Residential to Commercial and Mixed-Use (44 to 73 du/ac).

The following issues have been identified with the initiation request. If initiated, these issues, as well as others that may be identified through the course of the amendment process, will be analyzed and evaluated through the general/community plan amendment review process.

• Consistency between the proposed general/community plan amendment and the City's General Plan and Strategic Framework Element and Transit-Oriented Development Design Guidelines.

- The appropriate mix of uses for City Heights Square, including the need for commercial office uses to serve the adjacent residential uses.
- Ensure that ground-level retail uses are provided in areas designated as Commercial and Mixed-Use.
- The availability of recreational facilities, public facilities and/or services, in particular parks and public schools.
- The ability of the project to provide additional recreational amenities as part of the development proposal.
- Impacts on community transportation system to determine if any transportation improvements would be necessary.
- The availability of transit to serve the development.
- Compatibility of the density and intensity permitted under the proposed designation with existing and planned surrounding uses.
- The ability of the project to provide housing which meets the needs of the community, including the opportunity for on-site affordable housing.
- Provision of pedestrian amenities and streetscape improvements associated with new residential development.

Although staff believes that the proposed amendment meets the necessary criteria for initiation, staff has not fully reviewed the applicant's current development proposal.

Therefore, by initiating this General/Community Plan amendment, neither the staff nor Planning Commission are committed to recommend in favor or denial of the proposed amendment.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernard Turgeon

Acting Program Manager

City Planning &

Community Investment Department

Melisa Tintocalis

Associate Planner/CDSII

City Planning &

Community Investment Department

Attachments:

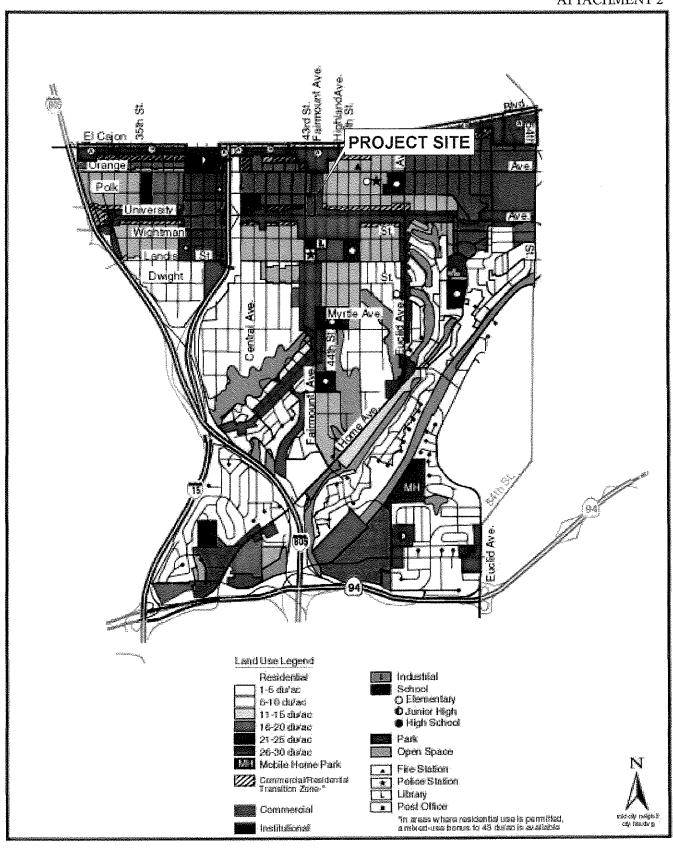
- 1. Existing and Proposed Land Use Designations
- 2. Mid-City Community Plan Area City Heights
- 3. Aerial Map
- 4. Existing City Heights Square Entitlements
- 5. Existing Uses at City Heights Square
- 6. Photograph of Subject Property 4300 University Ave.
- 7. Ownership Disclosure Statements (Price Charities, City Heights Square L.P., and La Maestra Family Clinic, Inc.)
- 8. Letters from Property Owners (City of San Diego's Redevelopment Agency, La Maestra Community Health Centers, and Chelsea Investment Corporation)



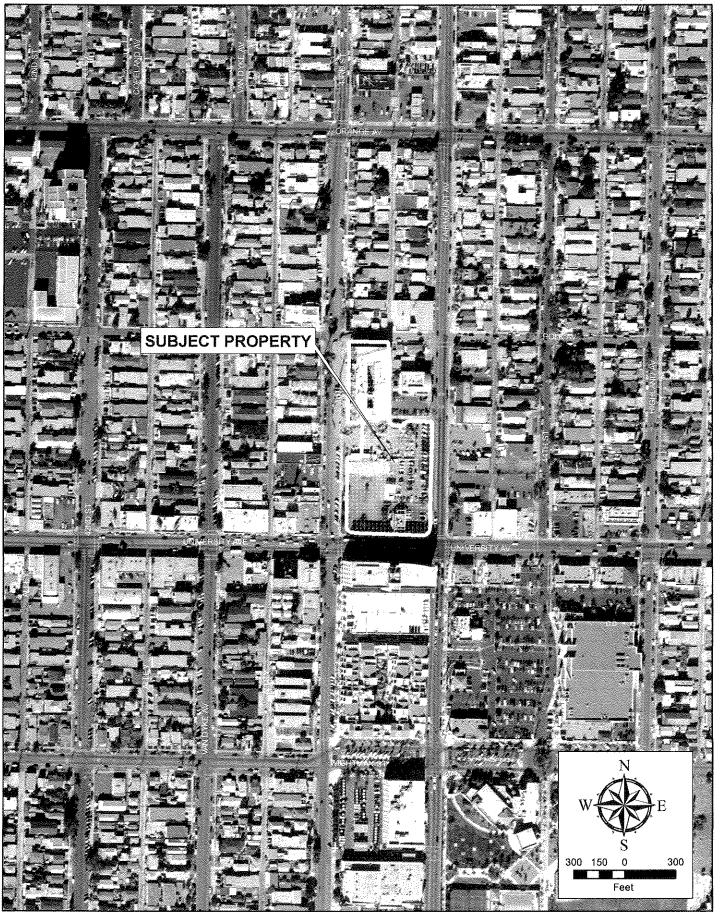




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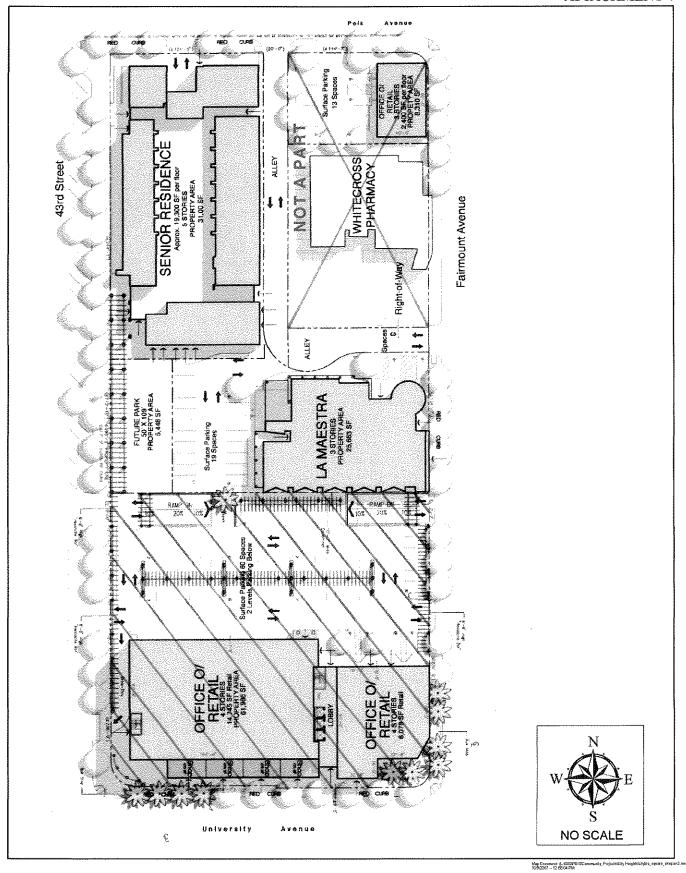






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City of San Diego Development Services 1222 First Ave., MS-302 San Diego, CA 92101 (619) 446-5000

Ownership Disclosure Statement

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City of San Diego Development Services 1222 First Ave., MS-302 San Diego, CA 92101 (619) 446-5000

Ownership Disclosure Statement

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City of San Diego Development Services 1222 First Ave., MS-302 San Diego, CA 92101 (619) 446-5000

Ownership Disclosure Statement

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Project Title City Heights Square	Project No. For City Use Only
University Avenue between	43rd Street and Fairmount
Avenue, San Diego CA-9210	
Part I - To be completed when property is held by Individual(s)	
By signing the Ownership Disclosure Statement, the owner(s) acknowledge above, will be filed with the City of San Diego on the subject property, with befiled with the City of San Diego on the subject property, with the owner(s) and tenant(s) (if applicable) of the above referenced purple who have an interest in the property. A signature is required of at least one individuals who own the property). A signature is required of at least one provided in the Assistant Executive Director of the San Diego Redevelopment Agreement (DDA) has been approved / executed by the Cimanager of any changes in ownership during the time the application is being the deprivation of the Project Manager at least thirty days prior to any public hearing on the normalion could result in a delay in the hearing process.	In the intent to record an encumbrance against the property. Please list perpetry. The list must include the names and addresses of all persons type of property interest (e.g., tenants who will benefit from the permit, all of the property owners. Attach additional pages if needed, A signature gency shall be required for all project parcels for which a Disposition and ity Council. Note: The applicant is responsible for notifying the Project and property of the property of th
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#### CITY OF SAN DIEGO REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

#### MEMORANDUM

DATE:

July 10, 2007

TO:

Marcela Escobar-Eck, Development Services Department Director

FROM:

Janice Weinrick, Redevelopment Agency Deputy Executive Director

SUBJECT:

Price Charities request to initiate a Community Plan Amendment for City

Heights Square, Mid-City Communities Plan

Price Charities is submitting a request for Planning Commission initiation of an amendment to the Mid-City Communities Plan to allow a proposed amendment to PDP No. 308092 (other associated permits may also require amendment, including NUP 327436, CUP 308101, SDO 308102). The envisioned PDP amendment will propose replacement of the currently approved commercial office and retail component (Building 1) of the mixed use City Heights Square development with multi-family residential and retail mixed-use.

The Redevelopment Agency (Agency) approved a Disposition and Development Agreement (DDA) with Price Charities on May 3, 2005 (RR-300383) for the City Heights Square Project and supports Price Charities' request for the initiation of a zoning and plan amendment analysis of the City Heights Square project.

The DDA includes the development of the Price Charities property and an adjacent site owned by the Agency and occupied by a Jack in the Box Restaurant, (APN 471-452-27 & 30). It is anticipated the current DDA will be modified concurrent with the zoning and community plan change requested by Price Charities. It is requested, after Planning completes its review and makes its recommendation on the appropriate zoning and plan designation, that the new designations also be applied to the Agency property (Jack in the Box site) as well.

It is anticipated the Agency will concurrently process a Redevelopment Plan Amendment for the City Heights Redevelopment Project to reflect any land use changes in the Mid-City Communities Plan.

Sincerely.

Janice Weinrick

Deputy Executive Director

JW/rhk

ee.

Bill Anderson, Director, Community Planning & Community Investment

Mary Wright, Deputy Director, Community Planning Division

Melissa Devine, Community Planning Division

Michelle Sokolowski, Development Services Division



August 13, 2007

Marcela Escobar-Eck, Director Development Services Department City of San Diego 202 C Street San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Ms. Escobar-Eck,

La Maestra Community Health Centers will soon break ground on our new City Heights Community Health Center and central administrative offices, one of four component projects within the larger City Heights Square development project under Planned Development Permit No. 308092.

We have been informed that the retail and office component of the larger City Heights Square Project cannot be built due to the recent steep increase in construction costs, and the inability to attract to the City Heights neighborhood office tenants willing to pay lease rates required by those increased costs. We have also been informed that the only viable alternative is to build a mixed-use retail and residential development and to eliminate the office use.

We understand that a residential development will require a change in the Community Plan and zoning to allow a higher density than is currently allowed, and that such a change is being requested by Price Charities, the original applicant for PDP No. 308092. La Maestra Community Health Centers supports this request by Price Charities and, as a party to the original PDP, we agree to the inclusion of our property in the consideration of a change in the Community Plan land use designation, including increased residential density and corresponding zoning change.

Lurge approval of this request.

∠ara Marsehañ, CEO

La Maestra Community Health Centers

Finance Development Management



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August 13, 2007

Marcela Escobar-Eck, Director Development Services Department City of San Diego 202 C Street San Diego, CA 92101

Dear Ms. Escobar-Eck,

City Heights Square, L.P., which I represent, is the partnership entity which built the 150 low income senior apartments, one of four component projects within the larger City Heights Square development project under Planned Development Permit No. 308092.

We have been informed that the retail and office component of the larger City Heights Square Project cannot be built due to the recent steep increase in construction costs, and the inability to attract to the City Heights neighborhood office tenants willing to pay lease rates required by those increased costs. We have also been informed that the only viable alternative is to build a mixed-use retail and residential development and to eliminate the office use.

We understand that a residential development will require a change in the Community Plan and zoning to allow a higher density than is currently allowed, and that such a change is being requested by Price Charities, the original applicant for PDP No. 308092. City Heights Square, L.P. supports this request by Price Charities and, as a party to the original PDP, we agree to the inclusion of our property in the consideration of a change in the Community Plan land use designation, including increased residential density and corresponding zoning change.

I urge approval of this request.

Charles Schmid

City Heights Square, L.P.

Chelsea Investment Corporation