



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE ISSUED: September 11, 2008 REPORT NO. PC-08-117

ATTENTION: Planning Commission  
Agenda of September 18, 2008

SUBJECT: Initiation of an amendment to the General Plan and College Area Community Plan to redesignate approximately 9.99-acres from Institutional (Hospital & Related Medical Offices), to Very-High Residential (75-110 DU/AC). Project No. 157028, J. O. 42-0968

OWNER/  
APPLICANT: The Dinerstein Companies, Alvarado Hospital

### SUMMARY

Issue - Should the Planning Commission INITIATE an amendment to the General Plan and the College Area Community Plan? The amendment has been requested to change the land use designation of an approximately 9.99-acre property located at 6599 Alvarado Road, from Institutional (Hospital & Related Medical Offices), to Very-High Residential (75-110 DU/AC).

Staff Recommendation - INITIATE the plan amendment process.

Community Planning Group Recommendation(s) - The College Area Community Planning Group will consider the proposed General/Community Plan Amendment Initiation at their regular meeting on September 10, 2008. Their recommendation was not available in time for the printing of this report, and will be provided on the date of the hearing.

Other Recommendations - None

Environmental Impact - If initiated, the proposed plan amendment and future discretionary actions will be subject to environmental review.

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

Housing Impact - The requested General/Community Plan amendment would change the land use designation of a 9.99-acre site from Institutional (Hospital & Related Medical Offices) to Very-High Residential (75-110 DU/AC) and would facilitate the construction of a multifamily residential development at a density range of 749 – 1099 dwelling units on the site where none are currently constructed. Impacts to housing supply and demand, as well as affordability, will be evaluated in more detail if the proposed General/Community Plan amendment is initiated.

**The initiation of a plan amendment in no way confers adoption of a plan amendment, that neither staff nor the Planning Commission is committed to recommend in favor or denial of the proposed amendment, and that the City Council is not committed to adopt or deny the proposed amendment**

## BACKGROUND

The 9.99-acre site, located at 6599 Alvarado Road in the College Area Community Planning area (see Attachment 1), is located east of Alvarado Court, South of Interstate 8 and Alvarado Road, north of Cleo Street, and west of Reservoir Drive, and is designated as Institutional (Hospital & Related Medical Offices). The relatively flat site has been developed with a hospital with several medical offices, and a parking lot (see Attachment 2). It is surrounded by lands designated as Commercial Office to the west, Open Space, High Residential, and Low Residential to the south, the Alvarado Hospital and Medium, Medium-High Residential to the east, and Alvarado Road, Interstate 8, and the Green Line Trolley to the north. The site is currently zoned as CC-1-3 and RS-1-1 (see Attachment 3).

The Public Facilities Element of the College Area Community Plan describes the site as the Alvarado Medial Center with other medical offices adjacent that are well integrated and linked by sidewalks and driveways. The plan acknowledges that the plan area is also served by the Kaiser Hospital, and that other medical facilities are located within a convenient distance.

The Public Facilities Element of the College Area Community Plan recommends that: a) the community should monitor hospital facilities within and adjacent to the planning area to ensure adequate hospital service for community residents; b) development in the office area adjacent to Alvarado Medical Center should emphasize medically-oriented and university-related office; and c) a pedestrian circulation system linking office development with the medical center should be maintained (see Attachment 4).

The site is also adjacent to the Alvarado Road Subarea of the College Community Redevelopment Project Area (see Attachment 5). The College Area Community Plan recommends that the Alvarado Road Subarea be developed into university-serving office and research and development uses, all of which are general office uses compatible with the current use of the site.

The San Diego State University (SDSU) 2007 Campus Master Plan discusses the Alvarado Campus in greater detail. Specifically, the Alvarado Campus includes an expansion of the current SDSU 2007 Campus Master Plan's northeastern boundary to incorporate additional

property, consisting of the multi-phase development of approximately 612,000 Gross Square Feet (GSF) of academic/research/medical space, and a 552,000 GSF vehicle parking structure (see Attachment 6). The future expansion would not include the site of the proposed plan amendment

The applicant has requested a plan amendment to change the land use designation of the 9.99-acre site from Institutional (Hospital & Related Medical Offices), to Very-High Residential (75-110 DU/NRA). The Very-High Residential Designation would allow the construction of a multifamily residential development with a density yield of 749 – 1099 dwelling units. It is anticipated that the General/Community Plan Amendment would be processed concurrently with any required development permits and an associated rezone.

## DISCUSSION

The City of San Diego (City) is unique among jurisdictions in that the process to amend the General Plan and/or a community plan requires either Planning Commission or City Council initiation before the plan amendment process and accompanying project may actually proceed. This initiation request does not constitute an endorsement of the project proposal. A staff recommendation will be developed once the project has been fully analyzed.

The purpose of the initiation process is not to discuss the details of the development proposal, but rather focus upon the more fundamental question of whether the proposed change to the General Plan and community plan is worthy of further analysis, based upon compliance with the initiation criteria (provided below). These criteria are now included in the Land Use Element of the City's recently updated General Plan, whereas before they were included in the Land Development Code. Although applicants have the right to submit amendment requests to the City, not all requests merit study and consideration by City staff and the decision-makers. The initiation process allows for the City to deny an application for amendment if it is clearly inconsistent with the major goals and policies of the General Plan. Most importantly, the initiation process allows for early public knowledge and involvement in the process as a whole. Additionally, the Planning Commission has the opportunity to advise City staff to evaluate specific factors during the processing of the proposed plan amendment.

The recommendation of approval or denial of the initiation is based upon compliance with all of the three initiation criteria as follows: a) the amendment request appears to be consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan and community plan and any community plan specific amendment criteria; b) the proposed amendment provides additional public benefit to the community as compared to the existing land use designation, density/intensity range, plan policy or site design; and c) public facilities appear to be available to serve the proposed increase in density/intensity, or their provision will be addressed as a component of the amendment process.

The City Planning & Community Investment department believes that all of the following initiation criteria can be met:

- (1) **The amendment request appears to be consistent with the goals and policies of**

**the General Plan and College Area Community Plan and any community plan specific amendment criteria:**

The Land Use and Community Planning element of the General Plan contains policy direction for implementing the City of Villages strategy, provides citywide land use policies and designations, and establishes community plans as integral components of the General Plan. It includes a General Plan Land Use and Streets Map, which is a compilation of adopted community plan land use and circulation system maps. The Element includes goals for balanced communities, equitable development, and environmental justice. A goal is to have diverse and balanced communities with a variety of housing. The element relies on community plans for site-specific land use and density designations and recommendations.

The College Area Community Plan includes the objectives of identifying areas appropriate for multifamily development; identifying density levels appropriate for multifamily development in order to ensure compatibility with existing single-family neighborhoods; and reducing the shortage of student housing by identifying a mixed-use area adjacent to the university for all forms of student housing.

The proposed community plan amendment, if initiated, would facilitate the construction of a multifamily residential development adjacent to the university, and may include student housing, and implement the goals and objectives of the General Plan and College Area Community Plan.

The Housing Element of the General Plan serves as a comprehensive plan with specific measurable goals, policies, and programs to address the City's critical housing needs. The Housing Element was adopted by the City Council under separate cover from the rest of the General Plan on December 5, 2006.

The College Area Community Plan includes the recommendations that all new multifamily housing, including dormitories, fraternities and sororities should be developed adjacent to the university; should be compatible with the bulk, scale, and character to adjacent development; structures up to 12 stories tall; should be considered with enclosed or underground parking; should include strong pedestrian links to the university, nearby commercial facilities and public transit; and multiple or mixed-use development consisting of housing, retail, and university-oriented office facility should be provided.

The proposed community plan amendment, if initiated, would allow the construction of a multifamily residential development with a potential density yield of between 749 and 1099 dwelling units, and would help implement the goals and policies of the General Plan and community plans.

The Public Facilities, Services and Safety element of the General Plan includes policies on the prioritization and provision of public facilities and services,

evaluation of new growth, guidelines for implementing a financing strategy, and guidelines for the provision of specific facilities. Policies call for new growth to pay its fair share, with the City and community-at-large responsible for remedying existing facilities deficiencies.

The College Area Community Plan includes the goal of ensuring a high level of public services to the community, and the recommendations that the community monitor hospital facilities within and adjacent to the planning area to ensure adequate hospital service for community residents; development in the office area adjacent to Alvarado Medical Center should emphasize medically-oriented and university-related offices; and a pedestrian circulation system linking office development with the medical center should be maintained.

The proposed community plan amendment, if initiated, would remove approximately 9.99-acres of land designated as Institutional (Hospital & Related Medical Offices), and designate the site as Very-High Residential (75-110 DU/NRA). If initiated, staff will evaluate the proposal for potential impacts related to the loss of medical offices, and whether or not the proposal would implement the goals and recommendations of the General Plan and community plans.

- (2) **The proposed amendment provides additional public benefit to the community as compared to the existing land use designation, density/intensity range, plan policy or site design; and**

The proposed community plan amendment, if initiated, would allow construction of 749 – 1099 dwelling units in an area where housing is currently precluded. In-fill development could provide housing of an affordable nature within the San Diego region, at a time when the City is searching for areas that can accommodate additional residential units. The proposed plan amendment may also provide an efficient use for the site by locating residential uses in close proximity to public transit. Additional public benefits may be identified as the proposed amendment is evaluated.

- (3) **Public facilities appear to be available to serve the proposed increase in density/intensity, or their provision will be addressed as a component of the amendment process.**

The College Community planning area is an urbanized community and all necessary public services are available. If the plan amendment is initiated, analysis of public services and facilities would be conducted with the review of the amendment.

As outlined above, the proposed plan amendment meets all of the initiation criteria as described; therefore, the staff recommends that the amendment to the City General Plan and the College Area Community Plan be initiated.

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

- Level and diversity of community support
- Appropriate size and boundary for the amendment site
- Provision of additional benefit to the community
- Implementation of major General Plan and community plan goals, especially as related to the vision, values and City of Villages strategy, including but not limited to the City's Strategic Framework Element, Housing Element, and Public Facilities, Service and Safety Element, as well as others
- Provision of public facilities
- Appropriate land use designation and zoning for the site
- Traffic circulation issues and the availability of public transit
- The possibility of including Medical Office or University Related mixed-use
- The analysis of the adequacy of medical and hospital facilities in the area to ensure sufficient health care service for community residents
- Compatibility of the proposed amendment with the SDSU Campus Master Plan
- Compatibility of the proposed amendment with the College Community Redevelopment Project Area
- Housing affordability issues with the College Community Plan and the General Plan
- Walkability and integration with the community
- Provision of recreation amenities

Although staff believes that the proposed amendment meets the necessary criteria for initiation, staff has not fully reviewed the applicant's proposal. Therefore, by initiating this community plan amendment, neither the staff nor the Planning Commission is committed to recommend in favor or denial of the proposed amendment.

Respectfully submitted,

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Program Manager  
City Planning & Community Investment

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Maxx Stalheim  
Senior Planner  
City Planning & Community Investment

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- Attachments:
1. Project Location Map
  2. Aerial Photograph
  3. Current zoning
  4. College Area Community Plan Text

5. College Community Redevelopment Project Area
6. SDSU Campus Master Plan
7. Ownership Disclosure Statement
8. Draft Resolution