



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

**DATE ISSUED:** July 16, 2009 **REPORT NO.** PC – 09-060

**ATTENTION:** Planning Commission  
Agenda of July 23, 2008

**SUBJECT:** Initiation of an Amendment to the San Ysidro Community Plan component of the General Plan to redesignate approximately 1.48 acres on the northwest corner of West San Ysidro Blvd and Averil Road from Low-Medium (10-15 du/ac) to Medium-High (30-44 du/ac) residential use.

**OWNER/  
APPLICANT:** Pharus II, LLC

### **SUMMARY**

**Issue(s)** – Should the Planning Commission INITIATE an amendment to the San Ysidro Community Plan? The amendment has been requested to redesignate approximately 1.48 acres on the northwest corner of West San Ysidro Blvd and Averil Road from Low-Medium (10-15 du/ac) to Medium-High (30-44 du/ac) residential use.

**Staff Recommendation(s)** – INITIATE the plan amendment process.

**Community Planning Group Recommendation(s)** – On June 15, 2009 the San Ysidro Community Planning Group voted 9-0-0 to recommend approval of the initiation of the community plan amendment process.

**Other Recommendation(s)** – 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.

**Code Enforcement Impact** – None.

**Housing Impact** – If initiated, the proposed amendment would analyze the potential to increase residential development on the approximately 1.48-acre site. Currently, 14-22 dwelling units could be developed on the site in the Low-Medium Residential designation. The proposed increase in density would allow for potential development of 44-65 dwelling units with a Medium-High Residential designation. In addition, the applicant is proposing a 100% affordable senior housing project at very, very low income affordability of 30% to 60% AMI. The plan amendment initiation proposal would allow 43 additional units not currently anticipated by the adopted San Ysidro Community Plan. If initiated, the proposed plan amendment would meet the City’s inclusionary housing objectives and would help the City address its shortage of affordable housing during a time when the City Council has determined that the City of San Diego is in a Housing State of Emergency.

**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 subject area of the proposed amendment is located in the San Ysidro Community Planning Area. San Ysidro is an urbanized community bounded by the Tijuana River Valley on the west, Otay Mesa-Nestor to the north, Otay Mesa to the east, and the United States-Mexico international border to the south. The site is located on the northwest corner of West San Ysidro Boulevard and Averil Road (see Attachment 1 – Location Map). The subject site consists of three lots that total 1.48 acres and contains two residential buildings with vacant land fronting San Ysidro Boulevard. The San Ysidro Community Plan designates the site as Low-Medium Density Residential (10-15 du/acre) which allows for the development of up to 22 dwelling units. The initiation request proposes to increase density to Medium-High Residential (30-45 du/ac) which would allow for the development of up to 65 dwelling units. The San Ysidro Community Plan is a component of the General Plan and the proposed amendment would not alter the text of the General Plan.

As outlined above, the applicant is proposing a plan amendment in anticipation of a very, very low income senior housing project. If initiated, the plan amendment would be processed with a rezone, other required development permits, and may pursue a density bonus.

The subject site is adjacent to residential, commercial, and institutional land uses (see Attachment 2 – Land Use Map). Surrounding the site to the west, east, and north is Low-Medium Density Residential (10-15 du/ac) uses. Older multi-family buildings are located east and north of the subject site. Directly across Averil Road an affordable housing project, El Pedregal Apartments, is under construction. The El Pedregal Apartments was approved in 2007 with a density bonus to allow for 45 units. South of

the site, across San Ysidro Boulevard, is the northern tip of the San Ysidro Boulevard Community Commercial corridor and Southwestern San Ysidro College Education Center.

The subject site is within the Sunset Neighborhood of San Ysidro which is an area of transition, containing single-family homes and medium- to large-scale multi-family developments (see Attachment 3 – Neighborhoods). The 1990 San Ysidro Community Plan is a reaction to poorly designed large-scale multi-family developments that occurred in the decades leading up to the 1990. The desire of the community plan is to promote better transitions and enhance the architectural context of the built environment through the development of low-density multi-family housing. Community Plan objectives for this neighborhood include requiring discretionary review of development proposals to preserve and enhance the neighborhood's small-scale, single-family character; provide for sensitive transitions between existing single-family and medium- to large-scale multi-family developments; and designate the southeast portion of the neighborhood as Low-Medium Residential. The Urban Form Element design guidelines recommend pedestrian-oriented development; design that reflects the scale, massing and texture of the human-scale and existing development; limiting the consolidation of lots to preserve character and allow multi-family development as long as single-family architectural styles are maintained. If initiated, the introduction of the Medium-High Residential land use would need to address transitional and neighborhood character issues by introducing design guidelines for the new land use, providing site specific recommendations, and/or developing a mechanism such as a Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone that would be identified during the amendment process to address the plan's policy objectives.

There are four other ongoing community plan amendments within the general vicinity of the subject site (see Attachment 4 – Ongoing CPAs).

- The Vista Lane Amendment project site is approximately two blocks north of the subject site and is a 13 property 9.5-acre project site along Vista Lane and Blackshaw Lane. The amendment is to redesignate the site from Low-Density Residential (5-10 du/ac) to Low-Medium Density Residential (10-15 du/ac). The amendment would permit an increase in density and allow for smaller lot development.
- The Mi Pueblo Pilot Village community plan amendment is comprised of approximately 14-acres in the heart of the San Ysidro community along the historic commercial core of San Ysidro Boulevard southeast of the subject site. The Mi Pueblo Pilot Village was initiated as one of the five Pilot Village project areas within San Diego to demonstrate how the General Plan's City of Villages strategy can revitalize existing neighborhoods and intensify development while retaining their individual character.
- The Ochoa Villas community plan amendment proposes to increase residential density on a 3.27-acre site from Low-Medium Residential (10-15du/ac) to

Medium Residential (15-29du/ac) in the El Viejo Neighborhood southeast of the subject site.

- The fourth ongoing amendment is referred to as the San Ysidro District 4 amendment which includes 15-acres of community commercial land use located in the plan's commercial District 4. The plan amendment proposes to allow mixed-use commercial and residential development where no current language supports mixed-use development in the District.

The Mi Pueblo Pilot Village and San Ysidro District 4 community plan amendments have stalled and it is likely that these proposals will be further discussed during the San Ysidro plan update process.

Depending on the applicant's timeline, it is possible that an amendment could eventually fold into the San Ysidro Community Plan update process. The update to the San Ysidro Community Plan is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2009. The purpose of the community plan update is to reflect current conditions and the long-term vision for the community. The goals of the community update process will be to: ensure consistency between the community plan policies and the General Plan; apply appropriate zoning that is consistent with plan policies; and establish community specific policies that are organized and formatted to complement the General Plan and its elements. General Plan policy allows plan amendments to be processed concurrently with a plan update until a preferred land use alternative is chosen. It is anticipated that the ongoing amendments in this community will provide some initial context for early land use alternative discussions during the plan update process.

## **DISCUSSION**

The 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 process.

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 San Ysidro community plan and any community plan specific amendment criteria:**

The proposed amendment would allow for development of 44-65 dwelling units where currently 14-22 dwelling units could be developed. The proposed amendment would help implement the General Plan goals by providing affordable senior housing opportunities within an area that is well served by transit and is in close proximity to commercial and public services. A bus stop is located directly in front of the subject property along San Ysidro Boulevard and the Beyer Boulevard Trolley Station is located 0.7 miles from the site. San Ysidro Boulevard is a primary thoroughfare within the community. A short distance from the site (approximately 0.5 miles), south along San Ysidro Boulevard, is the historic commercial corridor and community core for San Ysidro which has experienced some reinvestment and storefront improvements in recent years. This corridor is also included within the boundaries of the Mi Pueblo Pilot Village area.

The proposal would also address recommendations to provide diverse housing types and foster a more, vital, interactive, and secure community. The proposed amendment would help implement the San Ysidro Community Plan's recommendations to create a safe and healthy living environment, to link residential development to the provision of adequate community facilities and services, to develop a more physically cohesive San Ysidro community, and to improve the appearance of dilapidated structures. The proposed amendment would allow for the redevelopment of an underutilized site and help implement General Plan and community plan recommendations to promote pride, personal safety, and improve the pedestrian and urban environment. If initiated, the proposed amendment would allow the development of multi-family affordable senior units on a site that is primarily vacant and which is near services and public transit.

- (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 amendment would benefit the community by providing multi-family affordable senior housing at a time when the City of San Diego has declared a housing state of emergency. The proposed amendment would allow for a higher concentration of residences in close proximity to public transit and established commercial areas.

- (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.**

All needed public services (water/sewer) appear to be available as the San Ysidro community is an urbanized community. A new fire station was recently located along San Ysidro Boulevard not far from the project site and the San Ysidro Library and linear park are also located at the south end of the San Ysidro Boulevard commercial corridor. The proposal would increase the number of dwelling units currently allowed for in the community plan and a full analysis of public services and facilities (schools, fire stations, police stations, libraries, and parks etc.) will be conducted with the review of the community plan amendment, if initiated.

As outlined above, the proposed plan amendment meets all of the above criteria as described; therefore, the staff recommends that the amendment to the San Ysidro Community Plan component of the General Plan be initiated.

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

- Appropriate land use designation and density range for the site;
- Site design considerations for new land use designation;
- Compatibility and integration of new development with adjacent development;
- Impact of potential residential development on public services and facilities;
- Pedestrian circulation and transit improvements;
- Coordination of plan amendment with plan update process;

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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City Planning & Community Investment

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SEL/NAB/bcm

Attachments

1. Project Location Map
2. San Ysidro Community Plan Land Use Map
3. San Ysidro Community Plan Neighborhoods Map
4. Ongoing Community Plan Amendments in San Ysidro
5. Ownership Disclosure Statement