

DATE ISSUED: September 17, 2004

REPORT NO. P-04-135

ATTENTION: Planning Commission, Agenda of September 23, 2004

SUBJECT: Workshop for the Proposed Quarry Falls Specific Plan

THIS IS AN INFORMATIONAL ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION.

BACKGROUND

On May 6, 2004, the Planning Commission initiated an amendment to the Mission Valley Community Plan for the proposed Quarry Falls Specific Plan. The Planning Commission declined to initiate an associated amendment to the Serra Mesa Community Plan for the purpose of adding a street connection from Phyllis Place in Serra Mesa to Friars Road in Mission Valley, through the project site, providing access to I-805. Phyllis Place west of I-805 provides the only access to the Abbots Hill neighborhood of 227 single family dwelling units, a senior housing complex, and a church. While the Mission Valley Community Plan has recommended the street connection for the 20 years it has been in existence, the Serra Mesa Community Plan does not show this connection. The Planning Commission stated that they desired more information on the project proposal before it would consider supporting the initiation of the Serra Mesa Community Plan amendment, requesting a field trip and workshops on both the Mission Valley Community Plan update and this project.

The project site is located north of Friars Road between Mission Center Road and I-805 (Attachment 1). Of the property's 230 acres, 224 are in Mission Valley with the northerly six acres abutting Phyllis Place in Serra Mesa. The north edge of the site is approximately 235 feet higher in elevation than the south edge. Most of the 230 acres are currently in use for aggregate extraction and processing. According to the applicant, it is expected that mining operations will be completed in 5-10 years, although there is no expiration date on the Conditional Use Permit for the use. The Mission Valley portion of the site is designated Multiple Use and zoned MV-M (Mission Valley Planned District, Multiple Use). The Serra Mesa portion is designated Low Density Residential and zoned RS-1-7 (Single Unit Residential, minimum 5,000 square-foot lots).

The Mission Valley Community Plan requires a specific plan to develop areas designated Multiple Use. The Multiple Use Designation also calls for a pedestrian-oriented mixture of residential and commercial uses. In a similar vein, the Strategic Framework Element of the General Plan identifies Mission Valley as a Subregional District, meaning it constitutes a concentration of employment and housing and is appropriate to provide higher intensity development. This particular site is also identified as a potential Urban Village, and as such should incorporate a mixture of uses, a pedestrian orientation, and an interconnected street system. Use of the Transit-Oriented Development Design Guidelines in Urban Villages is recommended in the Strategic Framework Element.

Surrounding uses are: to the west across Mission Center Road the Mission Valley Heights industrial park and community commercial center; to the south across Friars Road a mixture of multiple dwelling units, retail, office, and hotel use; to the east beyond I-805, office and a utility substation; and to the north in Serra Mesa a church, senior housing, and single family dwelling units. Adjoining the property to the west is a 15-acre lot for which a proposal for a 276-unit apartment project is now in process (Attachment 2).

DISCUSSION

The current concept for Quarry Falls envisions approximately 4,800 dwelling units, 600,000 square feet of specialty “lifestyle” commercial, 620,000 square feet of office, and 12 acres of park space (Attachment 3). A village type setting is proposed, including a terraced park with water features at its core surrounded by a series of neighborhoods. Park space is also envisioned along Phyllis Place, with the lowest density development at the northernmost portion of the site and increasingly intense development to the southern portion along Friars Road. A town center will feature civic and retail uses with housing and offices. The issues anticipated with this proposal have been focused on the land use and design, and the Phyllis Place street connection.

Land Use and Design Issues

The proposed mixture of uses, the relatively high residential density and variety of housing types, and the pedestrian orientation appear to be consistent with the Mission Valley Community Plan and the Strategic Framework Element of the Progress Guide and General Plan. Among the land use issues that are likely to arise are the intensity of development, due largely to traffic concerns; the amount of the park and open space improvements, since there are no active parks in Mission Valley and Serra Mesa is below standard in the provision of parks; and the proposed phasing of development while aggregate extraction and processing continues. Design challenges include the treatment of the existing cut-banks remaining from the sand and gravel extraction and the ability to create a pedestrian orientation on a site with an extreme change in elevation.

Alternative land uses could include a lower intensity of retail and/or office with possibly an increase of residential units. This adjustment would help alleviate traffic concerns and

help with the City's need for additional housing. There may also be an additional need for park space.

It is expected that 10 percent of the dwelling units will be required to be affordable by households earning 65 percent of the median income. Mission Valley currently has 76 subsidized affordable units which are designated for large families: 38 units of Very Low Income (up to 50 percent Area Median Income) and 38 units of Low Income (50-80 percent AMI); Serra Mesa has none.

Phyllis Place Connection Issues

The addition of the Phyllis Place street connection would provide a needed additional freeway connection for Mission Valley and a more direct connection between Serra Mesa and Mission Valley, reducing excess volume on other streets and reducing travel distance and time. While the Serra Mesa Community Plan does not indicate that there should be a street connection at this location, the Mission Valley Community Plan Transportation Element recommends that "Public streets of adequate capacity to connect Stadium Way [now Qualcomm Way] and Mission Center Road with Interstate 805 at Phyllis Place will be needed when urban development occurs north of Friars Road between Mission Center Road and Interstate 805."

Without the Phyllis Road connection, a significant amount of traffic will continue to be required to go out of direction to reach I-805. Access routes to I-805 from Mission Valley are limited to east or west bound I-8, or from the north end of Mission Center Road, which requires driving north into Serra Mesa on Mission Center Road, then turning right onto Murray Ridge Road back to the I-805 interchange, making almost a 360 degree loop in the process. With the connection, direct access will be provided to I-805. If the connection is not provided, this added traffic will divert to already congested interchanges in the valley. In particular, the traffic will divert to the SR-163/Friars Road, I-15/Friars Road, and I-8/Mission Center Road interchanges.

Overall, the surrounding streets in Serra Mesa will operate at a worse Level of Service without the Phyllis Road connection. Not providing the Phyllis Place connection will add traffic to Mission Center Road in both Serra Mesa and Mission Valley, and to Murray Ridge Road in Serra Mesa. The one location that would carry additional traffic with the connection is Phyllis Place between I-805 and the future connection; however the future design of this segment will accommodate the added traffic at an acceptable level of service.

The Fire-Rescue Department supports the connection because the added street connection improves fire and paramedic vehicle access to Mission Valley, allowing direct access from Station 28 in Kearny Mesa to the project area. All of Mission Valley is currently underserved.

Another potential benefit of the connection is to divert drivers away from the Abbots Hill neighborhood at the west end of Phyllis Place, from which the only exit is Phyllis Place.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that motorists exit I-805 at Murray Ridge/Phyllis Place and travel west on Phyllis Place in a futile attempt to get to Mission Valley. With the street connection, these motorists would turn south from Phyllis Place into Mission Valley.

If the Serra Mesa Community Plan amendment to add this connection is initiated in the future, further studies will be undertaken to determine the impacts of the connection, positive and negative. Another important issue to be studied is the design of the connection to Friars Road, which will be a challenge due to the change in grade from Phyllis Place to Friars Road.

CONCLUSION

With the Phyllis Place connection in Place, preliminary traffic analysis has shown that there are significantly more areas that are better off in both Serra Mesa and Mission Valley, supporting the need to further study the connection at a minimum. If the applicant submits another request for an amendment to the Serra Mesa Community Plan, an initiation hearing will be scheduled.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments: 1. Location Map
2. Surrounding Uses
3. Concept Plan