

DATE ISSUED: September 17, 2004

REPORT NO. P-04-136

ATTENTION: Planning Commission, Agenda of September 23, 2004

SUBJECT: Workshop for the Mission Valley Community Plan Update

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

### BACKGROUND

The first and only Mission Valley Community Plan was adopted in 1985 (Attachment 1). It has been amended numerous times since to accommodate projects throughout the community. Substantial development has occurred in the interim to the point that there are only a few areas where significant development is likely to occur in the foreseeable future.

The community plan calls for the use of specific plans to implement the community plan for significant projects in designated areas, providing standards and guidelines for development. Five specific plans have been adopted and the community plan designates one additional 247-acre area for preparation of a specific plan, an area currently in use for sand and gravel operations. The Planning Commission recently initiated the Quarry Falls Specific Plan, constituting the majority of this area.

In 1990, the Mission Valley Planned District was applied to Mission Valley to replace the zoning in place at the time and further implement the community plan. After implementation of the Citywide Land Development Code in 2000, the Mission Valley Community Planning Group voted to endorse the replacement of the Mission Valley Planned District with the Citywide zoning. This could occur concurrent with or subsequent to the adoption of the plan update.

On October 22, 2002, the Strategic Framework Element and Action Plan of the General Plan were adopted, designating Mission Valley a Subregional District, which is defined as “major employment or commercial districts with adjacent multifamily residential uses, served by major transportation systems.” Also designated are a number of potential

"Urban Villages" in Mission Valley. Next to Centre City, this is the highest concentration of potential new development in the City under the "City of Villages." Mission Valley has a transportation system that can support this additional development, and has a central location to help reduce trip lengths, making it a prime candidate for these designations. Urban Villages are areas that have a mixture of uses, a pedestrian orientation, a public component, and a higher intensity of use. The immediate effect of this designation is to require the use of the Transit-Oriented Development Design Guidelines in the potential Village areas. The village designations will be fully implemented with the update of community plans; any needed changes to land use designations or zoning to implement the map will not occur until community plans are amended or updated.

The San Diego River Coalition, a collection of non-profit organizations interested in the river, and the San Diego River Foundation are coordinating river related projects. A San Diego River Park Concept Plan has been completed and a draft Master Plan is now under review by the City Park and Recreation Department. The recently established San Diego River Conservancy is now in the process of identifying potential projects and acquisitions to make use of \$7.8 million that State legislation has identified for use along the course of the San Diego River to its headwaters. The establishment of this conservancy promises to bring continuing resources for improvements and land acquisition related to the river.

## DISCUSSION

The developing issues identified above have lead to the need to update the nearly 20-year-old community plan. This need is based upon the age of the plan, the fact that some major components of that plan have not been implemented, and the fact that significant new planning efforts have emerged in recent years.

This update to the Mission Valley Community Plan will address several major issues: 1) land use, and in particular the designation of Mission Valley as a Subregional District with nine potential villages in the Strategic Framework Element of the General Plan, 2) the status of the transportation system and proposed transportation improvements, 3) recent planning efforts related to the San Diego River, 4) public facilities and facility financing, 5) the status of the specific plans, and 6) replacement of the existing planned district zoning.

### Land Use

The most significant land use trend in Mission Valley is the emphasis on residential development, similar to the remainder of the City. The Strategic Framework Element of the General Plan focuses on the need for additional housing in San Diego, with Mission Valley being a major focus. Another land use issue that has arisen recently is the needs of the automobile dealerships in Mission Valley.

Strategic Framework Element - The potential Urban Villages in Mission Valley are as follows, from west to east (Attachment 2).

1. Levi-Cushman Specific Plan Area -- The Levi-Cushman Specific Plan was adopted in 1987, applying predominantly to the area currently in use as the Riverwalk Golf Course. The plan permits 2.5 million square feet of office space, 1,000 hotel rooms, 1,235 dwelling units, and 200,000 square feet of support retail. The San Diego River floodway would be reconfigured, resulting in a channelized river, including a simulated island. Via Las Cumbres would be extended from Friars Road to I-8 and Camino De La Reina would parallel the trolley tracks on the south side, extending from Fashion Valley Road to Friars Road.

With the expiration of the existing development agreement in 2008, a different development scheme can be explored for potential future implementation. Among the issues are the mix of land use, the treatment of the river, and pedestrian and traffic circulation. The Strategic Framework Element suggest more of a concentration on housing and less on office. A renewed desire to restore the San Diego River also may also lead to a reassessment of how this section of the river is treated in the future. For example, a wider and more natural section of river may be considered; recommendations along this line are contained in the draft San Diego River Park Master Plan. And finally, the street and highway improvements likely do not meet current Caltrans and environmental standards. An amendment to the specific plan and community plan would be required to implement a revised scheme, but the general guidelines for future villages should be contained in the update.

2. Town and Country Hotel – This older hotel and convention facility is relatively underutilized. It is part of the Atlas Specific Plan which called for additional hotel and convention development but which were never implemented; residential is a potential infill alternative.

3. Mission Valley West -- This area north of Mission Valley Center has recently redeveloped into a retail center, but includes a surface parking lot that could be redeveloped into residential units.

4. Mission Valley Shopping Center -- This aging retail center has undergone several renovations and expansions in over 40 years. Whether or not it is able to maintain a competitive position as a regional retail center in its current configuration, the surface parking lots could be redeveloped into residential use.

5. Park in the Valley – This newer development north of Mission Valley Center is adjacent to a trolley station and has surface parking lots that could accommodate residential development.

6. South of Friars Road at Mission Center Road -- Both the east and west sides of Mission Center Road at Friars Road contain an eclectic, fragmented mixture of retail and office uses. Assembling the land for a redevelopment effort would be a challenge, but due to the age of the structures and the relatively low intensity of development, there is an opportunity.

7. Quarry Falls Sand and Gravel Site -- This 247 acre site should be depleted of aggregate resources between 2010 and 2015; an 18-acre parcel near Mission Center Road and Mission Valley Road is in process for apartment use. The Planning Commission recently initiated a specific plan for this site.

8. Rio Vista West and Fenton Marketplace -- While these sites just recently developed, the commercial portions have ample surface parking that could be redeveloped into residential use.

9. Qualcomm Stadium – The options are still open on the future of this site. However, whether or not there remains a stadium on the site, its development should not include the existing vast amount of surface parking. New components could include a mixed-use village, community park, and an enhanced river environment. For example, the draft San Diego River Park Master Plan suggests that the area south of the trolley be a restored river park.

Urban Village Guidelines – Village design and land use guidelines will be included in the plan update. These will include both minimum and maximum limits on land use to ensure an appropriate and balanced development. Design guidelines will focus on the relationship between uses, civic space, and pedestrian orientation, using the Strategic Framework Element and Transit-Oriented Development Design Guidelines for guidance.

Residential and Mixed-Use Development – In addition to the proposed village areas, the community plan and zoning should allow residential or mixed use development in areas where only commercial development is currently permitted. Redevelopment from commercial to residential use has begun to occur with the approval of the 350-unit Presidio View apartment project to replace the former Cinema 21 theater on Hotel Circle North, which required a community plan amendment. Interest has been shown regarding other commercial properties to redevelop to residential. Staff supports redevelopment to include residential use in areas of the valley where it is not currently permitted, such as along Hotel Circle North, Mission Valley Center, and several of the specific plan areas as previously mentioned. These areas are large enough to support a residential environment and are relatively close to commercial support services. Staff at this point is not supportive of residential use south of I-8 due to its isolated nature and the distance to commercial services.

The update will also address affordable housing. Mission Valley currently has 76 subsidized affordable units which are designated for large families: 38 units of Very Low Income (up to 50 percent of Area Median Income) and 38 units of Low Income (50-80 percent of AMI). The plan update will encourage affordable units to be located onsite and/or near transit, and to otherwise be appropriately located and designed.

Automobile Sales - Auto sales are a significant use in the central south portion of the valley, generally west and south of Mission Valley Center. Several of the dealerships have been pursuing offsite storage areas for their vehicles. This has presented a problem as auto storage in Mission Valley is only currently permitted in a developed industrial

park. Staff believes that allowing auto storage in non-industrial areas, such as office and visitor commercial areas, is not generally appropriate.

Onsite parking structures are an option. However, all but two of the dealerships are located south of I-8 where they are previously-conforming uses and thus are limited in their ability to expand. Currently auto dealerships are only permitted in the limited areas designated for retail use. A decision needs to be made whether to allow auto dealerships south of I-8--where the designation is Office or Commercial Recreation--through a change to the community plan and/or zoning, so that they are not constrained in their ability to expand, and whether this use should be allowed in additional areas. Another consideration is whether temporary surface storage lots should be permitted while a structure is being built on the dealership property, or if offsite parking structures for storage should be permitted.

### Transportation

Traffic congestion continues to be a significant challenge in Mission Valley. This is due to a number of factors, including the long, narrow shape of the community, the constraints of the river and surrounding hillsides, and the intensity of development. Traffic analysis of the existing conditions has been completed and shows significant congestion (service levels E and F) on segments and intersections along Friars Road, Hotel Circle North, Camino Del Rio North and South, Texas Street, and Rancho Mission Road.

Staff is in the process of studying future traffic under a series of land use and transportation system alternatives. The land use alternatives will vary the intensity and types of uses. The transportation system alternatives will eliminate various unbuilt road segments to test the impacts. For example, the City Council recently voted to not construct the Fenton Parkway bridge due to questions about its need, environmental impacts, and funding, so at least one alternative may eliminate it from the circulation system. Another alternative transportation system may eliminate the extension of Via Las Cumbres from Friars Road to I-8 through the Riverwalk Golf Course and Levi-Cushman Specific Plan Area. The traffic analysis is expected to be completed by early 2005.

Land Use Alternatives – Several land use alternatives are being tested to study future traffic. Due to the relative lack of vacant land, the amount of recent development, and the existing development agreements, there is limited flexibility in future development. A high-intensity alternative added a high-intensity development to the future Quarry Falls Specific Plan area, a “village” development to Qualcomm Stadium, and high density residential development to Mission Valley Center. A second alternative reduced the intensity of the Quarry Falls project, eliminated the Qualcomm Stadium development, reduced the density of residential at Mission Valley Center, and replaced some approved or built hotel and convention development with residential use. A low intensity alternative is likely to be tested next.

## San Diego River

The Park and Recreation Department is overseeing the preparation of a San Diego River Park Master Plan, which applies to the length of the river within the City limits. The principles of the plan are 1) clean up and restore hydrologic function to the river, 2) create a synergy of people, water, and wildlife, 3) reclaim the valley as a common, 4) unify fragmented lands, 5) emphasize a continuum of experience, 6) reveal the valley history, and 7) reorient development toward the river.

Preparation of the environmental document for this plan will require at least another year, but the draft plan's recommendations will be helpful for the draft community plan, such as in the design of buffers and pathways, the future treatment of the river, and the provision of an interpretive center and park improvements. It is uncertain at this point to what extent the river park plan recommendations will be incorporated into the community plan versus adopting it separately as part of the General Plan and referencing it when reviewing projects.

## Community Facilities

Community facility deficiencies in Mission Valley include fire and paramedic services, and parks. There are currently no public schools in Mission Valley and none are planned. An analysis by San Diego City Schools has shown that Mission Valley will generate no more than 200 elementary school students that would attend their local schools, even at a higher density scenario. And given the linear nature of the valley, most of these students would be closer to a school in a neighboring community than one that might be built in Mission Valley. In all likelihood, the only possibility for a public school would be a small charter school.

A fire station is scheduled for construction at the northwest quadrant of the Friars Road and Mission Village Drive interchange, where Qualcomm Stadium employees currently park. A second station is needed in the western portion of the valley. The draft plan will recommend that if the opportunity arises, the station should be designated within the Levi-Cushman Specific Plan Area.

One area of public facilities that needs special attention is parks. The existing community plan recommends that a share of the park and recreation needs be satisfied as part of private residential development. The planned district zoning requires a very high level of open space and recreation facilities onsite. Improvements have included privately built mini-parks and plazas along the river. However, this technique has resulted in a lack of active sport fields that are typically provided with neighborhood and community parks. According to the Park and Recreation Department, the public park deficiency under General Plan standards for the current population is about 37 acres, which will continually grow as the community builds out. The current plan identifies the YMCA for public recreation--since it is on City land and must make its facilities available to the public—and identifies the Sefton Field Little League fields for neighborhood park improvements; a community park is recommended on the stadium

property, and a mini-park is planned adjacent to the future fire station on Friars Road. Additional active and passive park sites will be identified in the plan update, potentially within the Quarry Falls and Levi-Cushman Specific Plan areas, on the stadium property, and elsewhere along the river.

Facilities Financing - The Facilities Financing Plan now in effect was adopted in 1988 and amended in 1996. It calls for transportation improvements (partially completed), 3 parks, 2 fire stations, a library (recently completed), and flood protection (partially completed); see Attachment 3. The Financing Plan is now being updated to account for significantly increased costs of the facilities identified in the adopted community plan. It will then be amended concurrent with the adoption of the community plan update to reflect facilities needs based on the revised land use.

### Specific Plans

The six adopted specific plans in Mission Valley provide a high degree of detail for the development of the affected areas (Attachment 4); one additional specific plan is in process. The zoning used for these areas is MV-M/SP (Mission Valley, Multiple Use/Specific Plan), meaning that all of the development regulations are found in the specific plan. The disadvantage of this system is that a number of documents are needed to discern all of the development regulations for the community.

Staff believes that repealing some of the specific plans would be advantageous where the information in the specific plan is no longer relevant. It may be possible to repeal one or more of the existing specific plans and incorporate relevant policies into the community plan. All but two of the specific plans are tied to development agreements.

1. Mission Valley Heights - Mission Valley Heights has no development agreement and construction is underway on the final two lots, so it could be repealed.
2. Atlas Specific Plan - Atlas has no development agreement, although it is tied to the Levi-Cushman Specific Plan by way of proposed circulation improvements. However, a description of these improvements could be transferred to the community plan so that the specific plan could be repealed, since none of the proposed development has occurred. Potential developers of the scattered parcels in the specific plan are interested in development that is contrary to the specific plan—usually residential use. The Town and Country Hotel is still interested in retaining its development rights as assigned in the specific plan.
3. Mission City Specific Plan - While the development agreement for the Mission City Specific Plan does not expire until 2014, it appears that the specific plan could be repealed, as the final stages of construction are underway. The Fenton Parkway Bridge identified in the specific plan has not yet been constructed but the responsibility for building the bridge lies with the City.
4. Levi-Cushman Specific Plan - The Levi-Cushman Development Agreement expires in 2008, after which the specific plan should be considered for repeal. A Master Planned Development Permit is being prepared for 47 of the 200 acres, as required by the specific plan before any development can occur, but only a 7 acre

vacant parcel is contemplated for development in the near future. At least nine holes of the 27 hole golf course would need to be closed for any of the remainder of the specific plan area to develop.

5. First San Diego River Improvement Project (FSDRIP) - The FSDRIP Development Agreement has expired but a pedestrian bridge over Friars Road among other improvements have not been constructed by the developer, so the specific plan should likely stay in place until this issue is resolved.
6. Rio Vista West (formerly Northside) – Construction has begun on the last two remaining vacant lots in Rio Vista West. It is included in the same development agreement as FSDRIP, so the issue of uncompleted improvements needs to be resolved before the specific plan should be considered for repeal.
7. Quarry Falls - The Planning Commission recently initiated the preparation of a specific plan for the 230 acre Quarry Falls and suggested that its preparation be undertaken in concert with the community plan update. At this point it appears that the two programs have similar timelines, although much can change in the next 18 months. As the programs progress, staff will consider the possibility of forgoing a specific plan and incorporating the development proposal into the community plan.

#### Mission Valley Planned District

The Mission Valley Planned District was adopted in 1990 to help implement the community plan. At that time, the zoning code did not have the variety of tools it now has after the implementation of the Land Development Code (LDC) in 2000. The LDC was designed to be able to replace planned districts, making available a number of new zones and design regulations, and being structured to allow the addition of new zones as needed. Replacing the planned districts with the LDC will greatly simplify the development review process.

An issue that needs to be addressed is how to maintain the level of discretionary review currently required in the planned district. The planned district established a relatively low level of permitted average daily vehicle trips for different areas of the valley, above which a discretionary permit is required for development. The LDC has dwelling unit thresholds above which a discretionary permit is required, but no size threshold for non-residential development. One possible method to trigger discretionary review would be an overlay zone or other LDC amendment. A similar trigger would also help implement the San Diego River Park Master Plan.

#### Schedule

The first draft of the community plan can be completed relatively soon after completion of the traffic analysis. It is expected that the analysis will be completed by early 2005, but the potential need for additional alternatives could extend that schedule. If the traffic



analysis stays on schedule, public and environmental review could be completed by the end of 2005 or early 2006, with adoption in 2006.

Respectfully submitted,

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- Attachments:
1. Adopted Mission Valley Community Plan Land Use Map
  2. City of Villages Opportunity Areas Map
  3. Adopted Financing Plan Excerpt
  4. Adopted Specific Plan Areas