

DATE ISSUED: October 29, 2004

REPORT NO. P-04-180

ATTENTION: Planning Commission, Agenda of November 4, 2004

SUBJECT: Initiation of an amendment to the Clairemont Mesa Community Plan and the Progress Guide and General Plan to redesignate a 3.7 ac site from Community Center Commercial to Medium Residential (15-30 du/ac).  
**(MADERA)**

OWNER/  
APPLICANT: David Kahn Trust/ William Lyon Homes

#### SUMMARY

Issue - Should the Planning Commission INITIATE a land use plan amendment to the Clairemont Mesa Community Plan and the Progress Guide and General Plan pursuant to Municipal Code Section 122.0103 to redesignate a 3.7 ac site from Community Center Commercial to Medium Residential (15-30 du/ac)?

Staff Recommendation - INITIATE the plan amendment process.

Community Planning Group Recommendation - On September 21, 2004, the Clairemont Mesa Community Planning Group voted 9-2 to recommend approval of the plan amendment initiation. (See Attachment 1 - Clairemont Mesa Planning Committee: Excerpts from Minutes).

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

Housing Impact - The conceptual project associated with this community plan amendment is anticipated to include 77 attached dwelling units. The current land use designation of Community Center Commercial (and the underlying zoning) would allow a density of 29 du/ac as part of a mixed use project, up to a potential maximum of 107 units. The proposed residential designation would allow a density range of 15-30 du/ac. While the conceptual project falls within this density range, it represents a lower density (21 du/ac) than allowed with the existing land use designation and zoning. The project proposed with the plan amendment represents a theoretical loss of 30 dwelling units from the maximum potential of both the existing and proposed land use. It should be noted that the development proposal associated with the proposed plan amendment would be required to comply with the City's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance.

**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. This action will allow the staff analysis to proceed.**

## BACKGROUND

The Clairemont Mesa community planning area is located in the central western portion of the City of San Diego east of Interstate 5, south of State Route 52, west of Interstate 805, and north of Interstate 8, approximately 6 miles north of downtown San Diego. Adjacent communities include University to the north, Kearny Mesa to the east, Linda Vista to the south, and La Jolla, Pacific Beach, and Mission Bay Park to the west (See Attachment 2 - Vicinity Map).

The subject property is a 3.7 acre site located at the southwest corner of Iroquois Avenue and Cowley Way (See Attachment 3 - Aerial Map). The property is designated in the Clairemont Mesa Community Plan as Community Center Commercial. The property is currently developed with the Sunset Bowl bowling alley, a building of approximately 57,000 square feet. Existing development on adjacent properties includes commercial uses to the south and west and attached residential of varying densities to the north and east. (See Attachment 4 - Land Use Map). Land use designations which border the subject property include Community Center Commercial to the south and west, Medium-High Residential (30-45 du/ac) to the north and east, and Medium Residential (15-30 du/ac) to the northeast.

The applicant has requested the initiation of an amendment to the Clairemont Mesa Community Plan to redesignate the 3.7 ac site from Community Center Commercial to Medium Residential (15-30 du/ac). Although the property is addressed on Clairemont Drive, the site has limited physical or visual relationship to that street. As shown on Attachment 3 (Aerial Map), two separate commercial buildings are situated to the west between the existing bowling alley and Clairemont Drive. Access to the property from Clairemont Drive is provided via a 40-foot "panhandle" which runs between these two commercial buildings. These buildings effectively screen the buildable area of the subject property, which may hinder the development potential of the property for retail uses that require "drive-by" visibility. It should be noted that the commercial buildings to the west sit on properties which are under separate ownership, and are not a part of this initiation request. Should the proposed plan amendment be initiated, staff would work with the applicant to ensure that the design of any associated development proposal would facilitate future connectivity and integration between these parcels should the adjacent commercial buildings undergo future redevelopment. Therefore, opportunities would be preserved for the overall area to function as a cohesive, mixed-use development.

Transit and abundant commercial services are located within walking distance along Clairemont Drive. In addition, the property is close to a number of public services and recreational facilities. The Clairemont Branch Library is located approximately one-quarter of a mile away. The Clairemont Park and Recreation Center, Marston Middle School, and Clairemont High School are all within three-quarters of a mile from the property. The Tecolote Golf Course and trailheads for Tecolote Canyon are located approximately one-mile away. Although these facilities are within a short distance of the property and the surrounding existing residential development, convenient access is somewhat complicated by the existing "superblock" configuration of streets in the area.

This superblock is bounded by Iroquois Avenue to the north, Cowley Way to the east, Field Street and Burgener Boulevard to the south, and Clairemont Drive to the west. Convenient access between Cowley Way and Clairemont Drive is not available due to the pattern of existing development and lot configurations between these streets. The majority of the subject property fronts along Iroquois Avenue to the north and Cowley Way to the east. These streets are residential in character, with properties developed with established complexes of attached dwelling units.

The applicant has indicated a desire to develop the property with 77 attached condominium units in a townhome configuration, through the requested redesignation and an associated rezone to the RM-2-5 zone. Should the proposed plan amendment be initiated, staff would work with the applicant to ensure that the development provides a suitable pedestrian network for future residents on the project site, as well as a connection which would facilitate access between Cowley Way and Clairemont Drive for existing residents in the area.

At their September 21, 2004 meeting, the Clairemont Mesa Planning Committee recommended to initiate the community plan amendment, by a vote of 9-2 (See Attachment 1 - Clairemont Mesa Planning Committee: Excerpts from Minutes). The group raised no specific issues, and supported the initiation without conditions.

There is one other plan amendment that has been initiated and is currently in process within the Clairemont Mesa community (See Attachment 5 - Plan Amendments and Significant Projects). This amendment is intended to analyze and develop solutions for existing parking deficiencies for commercial uses along Morena Boulevard to the north of the subject property. In addition, staff is currently reviewing a request to initiate an amendment to redesignate the property at the intersection of Morena Boulevard and Frankfort Street (location of the existing 'Coastal Trailer Villas' mobile home park) to multi-family residential uses. This initiation request was presented to the Planning Commission on October 28, 2004, and the results of this hearing were not available at the time this report was issued. There is also a significant project known as Bay View Plaza which is currently being reviewed by staff. The project, located at Clairemont Drive and Morena Boulevard, proposes to redevelop an existing shopping center with approximately 78,000 square feet of commercial uses.

Should the proposed plan amendment be initiated, any permits which would be required for this development would be processed concurrently with the amendment to the Clairemont Mesa Community Plan.

## DISCUSSION

Before a community plan amendment can be initiated, Section 122.0104 of the Municipal Code requires that any one of three initial criteria or all four supplemental criteria specified in the code must be met. The Planning Department does not believe that any of the following three 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 real property.**

The Planning Department does, however, believe that all of the following supplemental criteria can be met:

- (1) **The proposed land use plan amendment is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Progress Guide and General Plan and the Clairemont Mesa Community Plan.**

Staff supports initiation of the plan amendment since the subject property may be an appropriate location for compact residential development near commercial services, recreational opportunities, and transit, one of the key goals of the Strategic Framework Element of the General Plan.

The property is identified as a potential Neighborhood Village Center on the approved City of Villages Opportunity Areas Map. Identifying the property as a potential village center indicates that the site could be an area for focusing more intense, efficient development which is designed to be well integrated into the surrounding neighborhoods in a pedestrian- and transit-oriented manner. The subject property is located in an area which is currently characterized by varied development, including the existing commercial areas and attached residential development. The proposed plan amendment would enable the land use changes necessary to implement additional residential development at a location convenient to existing services, in keeping with the City of Villages strategy of the Strategic Framework Element.

Both the Clairemont Mesa Community Plan and the Strategic Framework Element of the General Plan encourage that commercial services, parks, and other recreational opportunities be convenient to residents. By implementing more compact residential development on the subject property, a maximum number of residents would be given the opportunity to utilize these services within close proximity of the site. Due to this proximity, residents may be encouraged to walk or take transit to these services, helping to meet key goals of both the Clairemont Mesa Community Plan and the Strategic Framework Element for a more efficient utilization of existing transportation systems.

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

The proposed plan amendment would facilitate village-type development as recommended in the Strategic Framework Element of the General Plan. Village development accommodates needed housing growth in a more compact, land-efficient development pattern which reorients development pressures within outlying rural areas and locations served by existing public facilities, such as the underutilized bowling alley and surrounding surface parking which exist on the subject property.

The subject property is well-located to give residents access to number of commercial services, public facilities, and recreational opportunities, a key goal of the Clairemont Mesa Community Plan as well as the Strategic Framework Element. In particular, future residents of the property could conveniently reach the abundant commercial services to the south of the property, as well as other commercial services along Clairemont Drive. Proximity to these services, in combination with a project design which encourages pedestrian activity and transit usage, could reduce automobile trips and would contribute to a more efficient use of the transportation system of the Clairemont Mesa community.

**(3) Public services appear to be available to serve the proposed increase in density or intensity of use.**

Public services appear to be available to serve the proposed residential uses, as Clairemont Mesa is an urbanized community, and services are available for this and surrounding sites. However, the adequacy of all public services to serve the proposed increase in residential density will be examined in more detail if this initiation request is approved.

**(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 Planning 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 workloads. The costs associated with processing this amendment will be paid for by the applicant.

As outlined above, the proposed plan amendment meets all of the supplemental initiation criteria as described; therefore, the staff recommends that the amendment to the Clairemont Mesa Community Plan and the Progress Guide and General 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:

- Analysis of an appropriate residential density and land use designation for the subject property

- Incorporation of an affordable housing component on-site, in order to satisfy the City’s Inclusionary Housing Ordinance
- Potential for development of a mixed-use project on the subject property under the existing land use designation and zoning
- Site design, building orientation, and architecture (in terms of bulk, scale, and character) which will be compatible with surrounding development, and will encourage pedestrian activity and transit usage
- Vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle access into and within the subject property, in particular, maximizing walkability and establishing pedestrian linkages to and from the site to surrounding development.
- Availability of public services and facilities to support increases in residential intensity; This would include an analysis of adequate school, park, and library facilities, as well as fire and police services to serve the proposed land use changes.

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 are committed to recommend in favor or denial of the proposed amendment.**

Respectfully submitted,

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- Attachments:
1. Clairemont Mesa Planning Committee: Excerpts from Minutes
  2. Vicinity Map
  3. Aerial Map
  4. Land Use Map
  5. Plan Amendments and Significant Projects
  6. Ownership Disclosure Statement