

DATE ISSUED: March 9, 2006 REPORT NO. PC-06-097

ATTENTION: Planning Commission
Agenda of March 16, 2006

SUBJECT: Initiation of an amendment to the Progress Guide and General Plan and the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan to allow moving and household storage uses on a 1.87-acre site within the Specialized Commercial land use designation of the Lincoln Park Neighborhood.
Project No. 82503

OWNER: Ahrens Realty and Development, Rosano Yan, Lee-Shong and Mei-Lee Chou

APPLICANT: Ahrens Realty and Development

SUMMARY

Issue - Should the Planning Commission INITIATE an amendment to the Progress Guide and General Plan and the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan pursuant to Municipal Code Section 122.0103? The amendment has been requested to allow moving and household storage facilities on a 1.87-acre site within the Specialized Commercial land use designation of the Lincoln Park Neighborhood.

Staff Recommendation - INITIATE the plan amendment process.

Community Planning Group Recommendation - On December 19, 2005, the Encanto Neighborhoods Community Planning Group voted 12-0-0 to recommend approval of a related initiation request (see discussion in Background section). Also, on January 9, 2006 the Southeastern San Diego Planning Committee voted 7-3-0 to recommend denial of the same related initiation request (see discussion in Background section).

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

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

Housing Affordability Impact: None.

This initiation request does not constitute an endorsement of the project proposal. If initiated, a staff recommendation will be developed once the project has been fully analyzed. This action will allow the staff analysis to proceed.

BACKGROUND

The 1.87-acre project site is located within the Lincoln Park Neighborhood of the Encanto Neighborhoods area of the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan. The elongated site is located between Interstate 805 on the west and 47th Street on the east (see Attachments 1 and 3). The site is designated Specialized Commercial by the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan (see Attachment 2) and is zoned CSF-3. The site has always been vacant and slopes down eastwardly from I-805. Surrounding uses include single family and multifamily residential to the east, southeast and northeast with corner retail and single-family residential to the north on the west side of 47th Street. An on-ramp to I-805 from the south in conjunction with the downward slope effectively precludes any development to the immediate south.

The project applicant has preliminarily explored several entitlement paths while working with staff in setting the proper framework for the project. On April 8, 2005, the applicant submitted an application for a general/community plan amendment initiation to redesignate the 1.87-acre site from Specialized Commercial to Industrial. The applicant proposed the redesignation to accommodate a moving and household storage facility which would not otherwise be permitted. During review of the general/community plan amendment initiation request, the Planning Department identified a number of issues associated with the proposed industrial designation. The industrial designation would be located across the street from existing single family and multifamily development and future industrial uses could result in potential land uses incompatibilities with the residential uses. In addition, truck traffic traveling to and from future industrial uses could negatively impact existing single-family neighborhoods. Finally, an industrial designation on the site would result in an isolated pocket of industrial, away from other industrial areas of the community which are concentrated along major streets such as Market Street and Imperial Avenue. Thus, the Planning Department could not support initiation of a redesignation from Specialized Commercial to Industrial. An alternative proposal to modify the language of the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan to allow moving and household storage facilities on the project site was also considered but initially rejected due to concerns about including site specific language within the community plan document.

In response to Planning Department concerns, and at the advice of City staff, the applicant subsequently modified the proposal to request a rezone and Southeastern San Diego Planned District Ordinance (PDO) amendment to accommodate the proposed use. The proposal was to rezone the site from CSF-3 to CSF-2 and amend the permitted uses of CSF-2 to allow moving and household storage. The CSF-3 zone is intended to provide for visitor-oriented uses whereas the CSF-2 zone is intended to apply to a broad range of commercial uses. If allowed by the amended underlying zone, this action would not require a community plan amendment.

Because the Southeastern San Diego PDO affects two recognized community planning groups, the applicant was requested to present the proposal to both groups. On December 19, 2005, the applicant presented the request for initiation of a rezone/PDO amendment to the Encanto Neighborhoods Community Planning Group which covers the area east of I-805 including the project site. The group voted 12-0-0 to recommend approval of the Southeastern San Diego PDO amendment initiation (see Attachment 4). However, the group voiced concerns about the potential proliferation of moving and storage facilities throughout the community and requested that these uses be limited to a few areas. On January 9, 2006, the applicant also presented the proposal to the Southeastern San Diego Planning Committee which voted 7-3-0 to recommend denial of the initiation (see Attachment 5). The group felt that the proposal to allow moving and household storage facilities within commercial areas would be detrimental to the goal of revitalizing older, larger retail areas.

Following public input and review by City staff, staff became concerned that the proposed modification to the CSF-2 zone could affect many areas of the Southeastern San Diego community. Attachment 6 identifies areas within Southeastern San Diego that are zoned CSF-2 that would permit moving and household storage facilities if the amendment were approved. Staff also rejected the idea of a rezone to a citywide commercial zone that would allow moving and storage facilities. This was disregarded due to the infeasibility of introducing a citywide zone on a small, isolated site within the Southeastern San Diego PDO.

In response to these concerns, in February of 2006, staff resurrected an idea that had been previously identified to amend the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan to include language specifically related to moving and storage facilities on the project site. If addressed within the community plan, a planned development permit could be processed for a future project to allow self-storage facilities within the CSF-3 zone without requiring a rezone. Due to the location of the site between I-805 and 47th Street and the elongated and sloping nature of the site, staff felt a storage use may be appropriate for this unique site if adequate design controls are incorporated into the community plan to ensure that future development respects adjacent residential development. Thus, staff recommends that an amendment to the Progress Guide and General Plan and Southeastern San Diego Community Plan be initiated to enable staff to further analyze the proposal.

One other general/community plan amendment is currently being processed in the Encanto Neighborhoods of the Southeastern San Diego Community. An amendment to redesignate 7.1 acres from Industrial to Mixed Use was initiated by the Planning Commission on December 5, 2002 for the Mar Vista project, a proposed mixed-use residential/industrial project proposed northeast of the intersection of 47th and Market Streets. The amendment is currently on hold as the applicant is redesigning the project.

DISCUSSION

Before a general/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 Southeastern San Diego Community Plan.**

The proposed general/community plan amendment would support goals and objectives of the Redevelopment Element of the Progress Guide and General Plan for redeveloping and rehabilitating underutilized areas of the City. In addition, the project would fulfill a goal of the draft General Plan Update Economic Prosperity Element by accommodating “Commercial development which uses land efficiently (and) offers flexibility to changing residential and business support needs”

The requested plan amendment would also meet objectives of the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan. The Commercial Element includes an objective to “Provide attractive, quality, community and neighborhood commercial facilities that offer a variety of goods and services to meet community needs.” The Lincoln Park Neighborhoods Element includes an objective to: “Expand community-serving commercial activities.” The proposed amendment would be helping to address a growing community need for storage facilities as families increasingly double up in housing units and need storage options.

The proposed amendment could affect the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan’s Residential Element objective calling for new development to respect the character of existing single-family areas. If the plan amendment is initiated, staff would evaluate whether design controls should be incorporated into the community plan to ensure that new development respects existing single-family development to the east.

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

The requested land use amendment would allow for the provision of a use which is increasingly becoming more in demand as households need to put some of their furniture and belongings into storage. Furthermore, the amendment could accommodate quality development on a site that has been vacant and underutilized for a number of years.

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

Southeastern San Diego is an urbanized area and all needed public services are available in the community. If the plan amendment is initiated, the adequacy of public services and facilities will be analyzed during review of the plan amendment.

(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 workload. The costs associated with processing this amendment, should it be approved, would be borne by the applicant.

CONCLUSION

Planning Department staff recommends that the amendment process be initiated to study the issues and impacts related to the proposed site specific community plan amendment to allow a moving and household storage facility on the west side of 47th Street south of Logan Avenue. The following issues have been identified with the initiation request. If initiated, these issues, as well as others that may be identified through the course of the amendment analysis process would be evaluated.

- Analysis of the need for moving and household storage uses outside of industrial areas
- The impact of the use on surrounding residential uses, including traffic, noise and visual impact
- Site design issues related to the proposed site, including scale, massing and relationship to the hillside
- Conditions under which the moving and household storage use could be allowed in the Specialized Commercial designation
- The cumulative effect of potential future requests for moving and household storage facilities in non industrial areas
- Consideration of a time limit on the duration of the use, in that other uses may become more appropriate in the future

- A thorough analysis of other potential uses
- Explore the feasibility of multiple uses to achieve a more active use of the site, such as a recreational facility on the roof in front of a storage use or other amenities to contribute back to the community in an environmentally friendly manner

ALTERNATIVES

As outlined above, staff considers the proposal to amend the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan to include language allowing moving and household storage uses on the project site to be the best option for the proposed project. However, a number of options have been considered for the site and the Planning Commission may want to consider one or more of the following alternatives:

1. Rezone the site from CSF-3 to CSF-2 and amend the Southeastern San Diego Planned District Ordinance to allow moving and household storage uses in the CSF-2 zone.
2. Amend the Southeastern San Diego Community Plan to change the land use designation of the site from Specialized Commercial to Industrial and change the zoning from CSF-3 to I-1.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Senior Planner

MPW/MP

ATTACHMENTS

1. 1999 Aerial Photo
2. Southeastern San Diego Community Plan Map
3. Project Location Map
4. Encanto Neighborhoods Community Planning Group Minutes, December 19, 2005
5. Southeastern San Diego Community Planning Group Minutes, January 9, 2006
6. CSF-2 Zoned Areas in Southeastern San Diego/Encanto Neighborhoods
7. Ownership Disclosure Statement