



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE ISSUED: April 13, 2006 REPORT NO. PC-06-130

ATTENTION: Planning Commission
Agenda of April 20, 2006

SUBJECT: Initiation of an Amendment to the Kearny Mesa Community Plan and Progress Guide and General Plan to Redesignate a 7.52 Acre Site on Aero Drive and Sandrock Road from Industrial and Business Park to Mixed-Use. Project No. 90865.

OWNER/
APPLICANT: Westcore Sandrock, LLC

SUMMARY

Issue – Should the Planning Commission INITIATE a land use plan amendment to the Progress Guide and General Plan and Kearny Mesa Community Plan, pursuant to Municipal Code Section 122.0103, to redesignate a 7.52 acre site located at Aero Drive and Sandrock Road from Industrial and Business Park to Mixed-Use?

Staff Recommendation – INITIATE the amendment process.

Community Planning Group Recommendation – On January 18, 2006, the Kearny Mesa Community Planning Group voted 14-0-0 in favor of initiating the plan amendment (see Attachment 1 for comments by group members).

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

Housing Impact – The proposal would add an undetermined amount of the residential units to an employment area in the community. Any development associated with the proposed plan amendment would be required to comply with the City's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance.

Approval of 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 subject site is located on the southwest corner of Aero Drive and Sandrock Road and is 7.52 acres in size (see Attachment 2-Existing Site Aerial). The site is currently designated in the Kearny Mesa Community Plan for industrial and business park use (see Attachment 3-Kearny Mesa Community Plan Recommended Land Use). The site is one of several parcels located on the southern side of Aero Drive that is designated for industrial and business park use. Immediately adjacent to the subject site to the south is single-family residential. To the north of the subject property across Aero Drive is the Montgomery Airfield airport. Immediately to the west is industrial and business park designation. To the east of the subject parcel across Sandrock Road is industrial and business park designation and the site contains an office building. The applicant is proposing redesignation of the site from industrial and business park to mixed-use to accommodate a multifamily, commercial and office development.

The site contains four buildings that total 102,856 square feet. Of that total square footage, 45 percent of the buildings are vacant. The one building is currently used as a call center; two buildings are being used by Gamma Scientific for research. The fourth building is vacant (see Attachments 4-7-Project Location Map and Photograph vantage points).

The proposed community plan amendment is located in an area of Kearny Mesa that has been studied for potential land use redesignations. A land use study was conducted for the area south of Aero Drive, east of Kearny Villa Road and within the boundaries of the Kearny Mesa Community (see Attachment 8-West Aero Drive Study Area Location Map). The study was part of a recent request to redesignate another site, called the Parkview Aero Court project, from industrial to mixed-use. The Parkview Aero Court project, located along Aero Drive, was redesignated from industrial and business park to mixed-use to accommodate 288 residential condominium units with 29 affordable units and 20,000 square feet of office space. It went before Planning Commission on September 15, 2005, and was approved by City Council on October 25, 2006.

The land use study that accompanied the Parkview Aero Court project is titled the West Aero Drive Land Use Study (Land Use Study) (see Attachment 9-West Aero Drive Land Use Study). The purpose of the study was to determine whether this area would be appropriate for collocation and/or conversion to alternative land uses. The Land Use Study area is comprised of approximately 70 acres, with 27 individual parcels. The majority of the land uses within the study area are other than industrial, and includes activities such as private schools, religious facilities, and offices. The Land Use Study summarized that the area in which the subject parcel is located is dominated by nonindustrial uses and is generally avoided by industrial users due to these conflicting uses. The conclusion of the study was that this area is more suited to nonindustrial uses such as office, institutional, and residential.

Surrounding land uses outside of the study area include office, the 805 and 163 freeways to the west, Montgomery Field airport, office/industrial uses, hotel, restaurant, commercial and golf to the north, Cabrillo Heights Park, Angier Elementary School and residential to the south, and the Serra Mesa/Kearny Mesa Community Library (under construction) to the east.

As a result of the study, the Kearny Mesa Community Plan was amended to identify this part of Kearny Mesa as an area in transition. The Land Use Study is now referenced in the Kearny Mesa

Community Plan as a resource in reviewing future plan amendments and potentially an update to the community plan. The Kearny Mesa Community Plan acknowledges that much of the area south of Aero Drive is industrially designated, but includes a variety of other uses such as office and various institutional uses. The Kearny Mesa Community Plan states that there may be other more appropriate land use designations for this area.

It should be noted that the Planning Department has received another application for a community plan amendment within this same study area for the Soille San Diego Hebrew Day School. That application proposes the redesignation of the existing day school site from industrial to institutional. That community plan amendment initiation is scheduled to be heard by Planning Commission next month.

The applicant's proposal to redesignate the site to mixed-use offers the potential to analyze a project for the site that includes multifamily residential, commercial and office. Should the proposed Aero Drive Mixed-Use plan amendment on the 7.52 acre subject site be initiated, any permits which would be received for this development would be processed concurrently with the amendment to the Kearny 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 Kearny Mesa Community Plan.**

The proposed community plan amendment would redesignate 7.52 acres of industrial land and business park to mixed-use. The site could potentially relate

better to the immediate surroundings to the south of the site which includes single-family residential uses and a school.

The proposed land use amendment is consistent with the Kearny Mesa Community Plan Housing Element. The community plan allows infill residential neighborhoods when they are not in conflict with the overall community goals. The Kearny Mesa Community Plan allows infill of residential neighborhoods and the proposed land use amendment would further balance the community between industrial and business park activities with residential uses.

The Kearny Mesa Community Plan acknowledges that the subject property is located in an area along West Aero Drive that is not suitable for industrial development due to conflicting uses in the area. The community plan states that the area could be developed in the future with mixed office and residential uses. The proposed community plan amendment would redesignate the industrial and business park land uses to mixed-use. This change in land use has the potential to relate better to the single-family residential uses and the schools and parks to the south in Serra Mesa.

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

The potential benefits of this proposal are that it would provide the opportunity for additional housing, and needed multiple dwelling units within an employment center. A higher ratio of residential use in such an area is advocated by the Strategic Framework Element of the General Plan to help reduce auto traffic, improve air quality, and provide more interactive neighborhoods, among other benefits. Residential use may produce less auto trips, but also tends to be a benefit for traffic by generally producing peak period trips that flow in the opposite direction as employment trips. Traffic impacts have been a major issue in Kearny Mesa, resulting in Floor Area Restrictions on employment uses.

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

All needed public services (water, sewer) are available as the Kearny Mesa community is an urbanized community. Full analysis of public services and facilities will be conducted with the review of the community plan amendment, if initiated. An amendment to the Public Facilities Financing Plan for the Kearny Mesa community will be processed concurrently with the community plan amendment to address facilities needs generated by the proposed land use change.

(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 the plan 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 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 Kearny 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:

- The impact of the proposed changes to Montgomery Field Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.
- The impact of the proposed development on surrounding industrial users.
- Analysis of 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.
- Incorporation of a variety of residential unit types within the project.
- Creation of a new neighborhood to ensure integrated site design, building orientation and architecture 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.
- Traffic impacts resulting from the proposed development along with any associated improvements.
- 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.
- Pedestrian connections on-site and within the community to reduce the overall need for auto dependence.
- Evaluation of site constraints related to hazardous materials.
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,

Cecilia G. Williams, AICP
Program Manager
Planning Department

Lesley Henegar
Senior Planner
Planning Department

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- Attachments:
1. Kearny Mesa Community Planning Group letter from January 18, 2006 meeting
 2. Existing Site Aerial
 3. Kearny Mesa Community Plan Recommended Land Use
 4. Project Location Map and photograph vantage points
 5. Existing site photographs
 6. Existing site photographs
 7. Existing site photographs
 8. West Aero Drive Study Area Location Map
 9. West Aero Drive Land Use Study
 10. Ownership Statement