



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Planning Commission

DATE ISSUED: October 8, 2026 REPORT NO. PC-26-032

HEARING DATE: October 15, 2026

SUBJECT: 11818 BERNARDO PLAZA COURT (CITY VIEW) - Process Five Decision

PROJECT NUMBER: PRJ-1123397

REFERENCE: [Staff Report to Planning Commission](#) - Rancho Bernardo Community Plan Amendment Initiation – 11818 - 11858 Bernardo Plaza Court - PRJ-1116938

OWNER/APPLICANT: *Rancho Bernardo Day LLC and 1818 Bernardo LLC/KB Home Cal Management Services, LLC*

SUMMARY

Issue: Should the Planning Commission recommend to the City Council approval of an amendment to the General Plan to redesignate a 5.5-acre site from Commercial Employment, Retail, and Services to Residential, an amendment to the [Rancho Bernardo Community Plan](#) to redesignate the land use designation from Specialized Commercial to Residential – Medium Density (14-29 dwelling units per net residential acre), a rezone from Commercial Community (CC-2-3) Zone to Residential Multiple Unit (RM-2-5) Zone, and a Vesting Tentative Map to subdivide the site and construct 122 multiple-dwelling units, including 13 affordable dwelling units located at [11818, 11828, 11838, 11848, and 11858 Bernardo Plaza Court](#) within the Rancho Bernardo Community Planning Area?

Proposed Actions:

1. Recommend the City Council ADOPT a Resolution adopting Single-Condition Negative Declaration No. 1123397/ State Clearinghouse No. 2026070730;
2. Recommend the City Council APPROVE General Plan Amendment and Rancho Bernardo Community Plan Amendment No. PMT-3320457;
3. Recommend the City Council APPROVE Rezone No. PMT-3320459; and
4. Recommend the City Council APPROVE Vesting Tentative Map No. PMT-3320460.

Fiscal Considerations: All costs associated with processing the approvals for this action are paid from a deposit account maintained by the applicant.

Housing Impact Statement:

The Rancho Bernardo Community Plan does not currently allow for the development of homes on the 5.5-acre project site. The project is requesting a General Plan and Community Plan Amendment to change the designation to Residential-Medium Density (14 to 29 dwelling units per acre, which would allow between 77 and 160 homes). The project proposes a total of 122 for-sale townhomes, including 13 deed-restricted affordable homes (10 percent) to households earning at or below 100 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) (Attachment 17).

According to the San Diego Housing Commission, there are 437 existing deed-restricted affordable homes within the Rancho Bernardo Community Plan Area as of July 2026, which is just over 2 percent of the community's total number of homes compared to 5 percent Citywide. The proposed townhomes would add to the City's housing stock and help address the Citywide housing crisis. The project site was not identified for residential development in the *General Plan Housing Element 2021–2029 Adequate Sites Inventory Report*. The project site is located within a census tract designated as a High Resource Opportunity Area by the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee's (CTCAC) 2026 Opportunity and Neighborhood Change Map. The project would not result in the displacement or loss of existing homes.

Community Planning Group Recommendation:

On September 17, 2026, the Rancho Bernardo Planning Group voted 8–0 to recommend denial of the project and submitted a letter outlining the basis for their recommendation (Attachment 1). The issues identified in the letter are summarized below, followed by a staff response.

Overall, community members raised concerns about how the project integrates within the community. This includes concerns related to:

- The project's location relative to existing Community Plan land use designations along with the cumulative effects of two recently completed ministerial residential projects and the potential for added demand on public services and other facilities;
- The project's amenities are smaller than those typically offered within Rancho Bernardo's HOA based developments; and
- A lack of parking, traffic conditions influenced by regional growth, local utility capacity, and the practicality of accessing nearby transit due to walking distance, sidewalk conditions, and freeway ramp crossings.

Staff determined the project complies with the applicable requirements of the San Diego Municipal Code, including recreational amenities requirements, parking, and development standards associated with multiple dwelling unit housing in a Transit Priority Area. The project incorporates over 9,000 square feet of common open space, active and passive recreation elements, and multimodal improvements that align with City regulations. Existing fire, police, library, school, and utility services can appropriately serve the site, and the project includes sustainable and energy efficient features such as photovoltaic solar panels, all electric buildings, drought tolerant landscaping, and stormwater quality measures. The project is located in a Transit Priority Area and there is no minimum parking requirement. The site is located within a 0.4-mile walking distance of bus service MTS Route 945, which provides direct access to the Rancho Bernardo Transit Station. Proposed frontage improvements by

the project include dedication of four feet of right-of-way to provide a 14-foot-wide parkway including a five-foot-wide non-contiguous sidewalks and 8-foot-wide landscaped area. The project would also provide and maintain transportation amenities including transit subsidies for residents, an on-site bicycle repair station, transit and rideshare information kiosk, and a private outdoor fitness circuit. These components are consistent with City policies and improve the surrounding area.

Environmental Impact:

[Single-Condition Negative Declaration](#) No. 1123397/State Clearinghouse (SCH) No. 2026070730 was prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Statute and Guidelines.

BACKGROUND

Location:

The 5.5-acre site is located at 11818-11858 Bernardo Plaza Court (Assessor Parcel Number 274-78-114), east of Interstate 15 and near the intersection of Rancho Bernardo Road and Bernardo Center Drive. The site contains existing commercial office uses within the Rancho Bernardo Community Plan area and contains a mix of vacant and occupied buildings, including a financial institution and a medical office (Attachment 2, Location). It is adjacent to existing office and retail uses, the Rancho Bernardo Post Office, and Fire Station 33.

Community Plan:

The Rancho Bernardo Community Plan (Community Plan), originally adopted in 1978 and last amended in 2016, designates the site as Specialized Commercial, a land use category intended to support visitor-oriented and community-serving commercial and recreational development. The surrounding land use designations include Town Center, Specialized Commercial, and Office Commercial (Attachment 3, Land Use Map).

Zoning:

The project site is zoned Commercial Community (CC-2-3), which accommodates a variety of community-serving commercial uses with an auto orientation (Attachment 4, Zoning Map). Residential uses are not permitted within this base zone, except for permanent supportive housing under limited circumstances.

Transit:

The project site is within a Transit Priority Area; Route 945 stops at Bernardo Center Drive and Rancho Bernardo Road and provides direct access to the Rancho Bernardo Transit Station, which is served by Routes 20, 235, and 280. Planned regional transit improvements include a Next Generation Rapid Bus route along the I-15 corridor (Attachment 5, Transit Map).

Circulation:

The surrounding circulation network includes Interstate 15 to the west, Rancho Bernardo Road to the north, Bernardo Center Drive to the east, and Bernardo Plaza Court to the south, which provides primary access to the site.

Bicycle Facilities:

Bicycle facilities in the area include existing Class III routes along Rancho Bernardo Road and Bernardo

Center Drive, with planned Class II bicycle facilities on Rancho Bernardo Road and a continued Class III route on Bernardo Center Drive per the Community Plan (Attachment 6, Bicycle Facilities).

Public Facilities:

The project site is served by a range of public facilities. The site is located within the Poway Unified School District, 4.3 miles from Highland Ranch Elementary School, 2.4 miles from Bernardo Heights Middle School, and 2.4 miles from Rancho Bernardo High School within the Poway Unified School District. Additionally, Palomar College is located approximately 1.5 miles to the east. Rancho Bernardo Community Park lies roughly 2.3 miles southeast of the site. The Rancho Bernardo Library is located about one mile north of the site. Public safety services are provided by the Police Department's Northeastern Division and San Diego Fire Station No. 33, located about 0.2 miles east of the site.

DISCUSSION

Project Description:

The project proposes to demolish approximately 75,000 square feet of existing commercial office buildings and redevelop the site with 122 townhome-style multiple-dwelling condominium units, including 13 deed-restricted affordable units, distributed across 22 residential buildings. This redevelopment would replace an office building with new residential housing in an area with retail services and public transit. The proposed project design includes pedestrian-oriented building placement, frontage improvements, including dedicating four feet of right-of-way and constructing a 14-foot-wide parkway with non-contiguous sidewalk, enhanced landscaping, and private recreational amenities intended to create an active, walkable residential setting.

Required Actions:

The proposed project consists of the following Process Five actions:

- Land use plan amendments to the General Plan to redesignate the site from Commercial Employment, Retail, and Services to Residential and the Rancho Bernardo Community Plan to redesignate the site from Specialized Commercial to Residential – Medium Density.
- Rezone the site per San Diego Municipal Code (SDMC) Section 123.0105 from Community Commercial (CC-2-3) to Residential-Multiple (RM-2-5) to allow residential development.
- A Vesting Tentative Map is required under SDMC Section 125.0410 to subdivide the 5.5-acre site into 122 condominium units on a single lot.
- A Single-Condition Negative Declaration was prepared in accordance with CEQA.

Land Use Designation:

To facilitate residential development, the project would amend both the General Plan and Community Plan. A General Plan amendment is required to redesignate the site from Commercial Employment, Retail, and Services to Residential. The Community Plan amendment would redesignate the property from the Specialized Commercial land use category to Residential – Medium Density (14–29 dwelling units per acre) within the Rancho Bernardo Town Center (Attachments 7, 8 and 9). Based on the

Residential – Medium Density designation of 14–29 dwelling units per acre, the 5.5-acre site could accommodate between 77 and 160 homes. These amendments respond to regional housing needs, expand residential opportunities in a High Resource Area, and support the City of Villages strategy by introducing residential uses into an existing commercial area.

Rezone:

The site is currently zoned Commercial-Community (CC-2-3), which does not allow residential development except limited supportive housing. The project proposes a rezone to Residential-Multiple (RM-2-5), permitting multiple residential uses. Under the proposed RM-2-5 rezone, the site could accommodate up to 160 dwelling units, based on the zone's maximum density of one unit per 1,500 square feet. The project, however, proposes 122 dwelling units, placing it well within the allowable capacity of the RM-2-5 zone while remaining consistent with the Medium Density Residential land use designation (Attachments 10 and 11).

Vesting Tentative Map:

The project proposes a Vesting Tentative Map for 122 condominium units on one lot at a density of 22 units per acre, consistent with the proposed rezone and land use designation. The Vesting Tentative Map includes project conditions that ensure the project meets City standards for public improvements, utilities, stormwater, transportation, landscaping, and cultural resource protection (Attachments 12, 13 and 14).

Site Design:

The townhomes are arranged in 22 multiple-dwelling-unit buildings, with a pedestrian-oriented frontage along Bernardo Plaza Court. The architecture is compatible with the surrounding structures and introduces residential uses into an existing commercial area to create a more complete neighborhood. In addition, the homes are designed with a solar orientation to maximize opportunities for passive heating and cooling, supporting long-term energy efficiency and sustainable design goals.

Access:

Vehicular access to the project would continue to be provided from Bernardo Plaza Court. The project would remove and replace the two existing non-utilized driveways with a full-height curb, gutter, and non-contiguous sidewalk and construct a new 25-foot-wide driveway along the project's frontage on Bernardo Plaza Court. The entire site would be graded to accommodate the townhome development and internal circulation. The project also incorporates a comprehensive set of pedestrian and bicycle enhancements to support multimodal mobility within and around the site. These improvements include two bicycle racks with 10 short-term bicycle spaces and an on-site public bicycle repair station near the street frontage on Bernardo Plaza Court. An approximately 0.40-mile perimeter walking trail, which incorporates outdoor fitness equipment, will also be constructed within the project site.

Frontage Improvements:

Frontage improvements are proposed along Bernardo Plaza Court to improve pedestrian comfort, safety, and connectivity. These include the dedication of four feet of additional right-of-way and the construction of a 14-foot parkway containing eight feet of landscaping and a five-foot-wide

non-contiguous sidewalk. A new streetlight would also be installed as part of the project to improve nighttime visibility and overall public safety along the project's frontage on Bernardo Plaza Court.

Amenities:

The project provides approximately 9,000 square feet of common open space, distributed throughout the site to create recreation nodes for residents. These amenities include a play structure, tables and barbeques, a shade structure, a dog run, and both active and passive recreational areas, complementing the perimeter walking trail and contributing to a well-rounded, community-serving design.

Sustainability Features and Infrastructure:

Sustainable design is incorporated throughout the project, with compliance with Title 24, CALGreen, and Climate Action Plan Consistency Regulations. The landscape palette prioritizes drought-tolerant, native, and low-water-use species, including 122 trees, six of which are new street trees. Buildings are oriented to capture passive solar heating and cooling, and the project includes installing solar panels to generate on-site renewable energy. The project also ties into existing municipal utility infrastructure, with connections to water, sewer, fire, and storm drain systems within Bernardo Plaza Court. Improvements include water main upgrades, new storm drain inlets, and three Modular Wetland Systems to manage stormwater quality consistent with City standards.

Waivers:

The project requests three waivers to development regulations under the Affordable Housing Regulations pursuant to SDMC section 143.0743.

Front Yard Setback: The project requests a waiver from the front yard setback requirements. San Diego Municipal Code (SDMC) Section 131.0431(d), Table 131-04G requires a minimum front-yard setback of 15 feet, while the project proposes an eight-foot setback. This reduction would help accommodate the dedication of four feet of right-of-way and a 14-foot-wide parkway with a five-foot wide non-contiguous sidewalk and is justified because adequate visibility along Bernardo Plaza Court would still be maintained, and the 14-foot landscaped parkway would enhance the landscape buffer and preserve a safe pedestrian environment without impacting site visibility.

Retaining Wall Height: The project seeks a waiver of the retaining wall height requirement. SDMC Section 142.0340(d) limits retaining walls to six feet, but the project proposes walls ranging from six to 20 feet due to the site's existing manufactured slope and 15-foot grade differential, which necessitates taller retaining walls to minimize grading impacts, conform to existing topography, and maximize the developable area for residential units.

Loading Space: The project requests a waiver for the loading space requirements. SDMC Section 142.1010(a) requires two loading spaces, whereas the project provides none. The proposed residential development will consist of for-sale condominium units with move-in occurring in phases. The project anticipates that residents would temporarily park near their residence during move-in and move-out. Loading activities such as moving in and out of the townhomes would be accommodated at individual

private garages. Eliminating these spaces also allows for a more efficient site design that supports residential density.

Climate Action Plan

The proposed project would be consistent with Climate Action Plan Strategy 3: Mobility & Land Use. The Climate Action Plan contains measures towards achieving the City climate goals for greenhouse gas reductions. The project would be consistent with the Climate Action Plan Measure 3.5, which calls for new developments in Transit Priority Areas where residents can walk, bike, and take transit to help meet City climate goals. The proposed townhome development is within a Transit Priority Area and is providing on-site bicycle amenities and sidewalk frontage improvements to support biking, walking, and rolling.

General Plan and Community Plan Analysis:

The General Plan establishes the long-term citywide vision, goals and policies for development. The community would benefit directly from an increased and diversified housing supply. Community plans are an integral part of the General Plan and provide refined community-specific policies. The proposed project would provide affordable and workforce housing to this underutilized commercial site within proximity to transit service, which would provide transit access to regional job and educational centers, which would help to meet Citywide housing, climate, and equity goals in the General Plan. The proposed project would be consistent with the following policies in the General Plan and Rancho Bernardo Community Plan.

City of Villages Strategy

The City of Villages strategy calls for increasing homes and jobs in locations that are connected to the regional transit system and future transit investments. It is designed to transform auto-centric commercial areas into vibrant pedestrian-friendly centers. The proposed project is consistent with the General Plan's City of Villages strategy and the Climate Action Plan by focusing compact residential growth within an area designated with a medium-high village propensity as shown on General Plan Figure LU-1, Village Climate Goal Propensity. By adding 122 townhomes within a Transit Priority Area, the project would increase the housing supply and diversity near existing transit and mixed uses. As addressed in the General Plan Land Use Element, due to the limited availability of developable vacant land, infill and redevelopment must play an increasing role in providing homes and jobs to support the city's future growth.

This location supports walkable, connected communities that encourage biking, walking, and transit use, directly advancing the city's climate, housing, and equity goals. The development would help to further the City's commitment to fostering economically and socially diverse communities. By introducing a mix of market-rate and affordable homeownership opportunities within a high-resource, job-rich area, the project would help provide people with opportunities to live near employment, shopping, transit, and schools. The proposed project would help to implement the City of Villages strategy, which is an important component of the City's strategy to reduce local contributions to greenhouse gas emissions.

The proposed project would assist the City in meeting housing goals addressed in the Housing Element by providing new housing on an underutilized site near transit. This is also consistent with the Rancho Bernardo Community Plan's Balanced Community Policy, which encourages supplying apartments, townhouses, single-family dwellings, and other housing types to meet growing demands for lower-cost housing.

Affordability: To meet the Rancho Bernardo Community Plan's balanced community goal and the General Plan Housing Element affordable housing goal of ensuring diverse and balanced neighborhoods and communities with housing available for households of all income levels, the project would include 13 affordable homes (10 percent of the total project) for households earning at or below 100 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI). The proposed project would provide homes for moderate- to middle-income workers near transit that would provide access to regional employment centers, which is consistent with Housing Element policy HE-C.3. This would also be consistent with the Community Plan's residential objective by diversifying the community's housing inventory.

Fair Housing: The project site is located within a census tract designated as a High Resource Opportunity Area by the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee's (CTCAC) 2026 Opportunity and Neighborhood Change Map. Introducing moderate- and below-moderate-income housing to this high-resource, job-rich area in proximity to transit and biking facilities improves equitable access to high-performing neighborhoods and reduces commute times for working families, helping the City to affirmatively further fair housing, which is consistent with General Plan Land Use Policy LU-H.2 and Housing Element Policy HE-I.2.

Inclusive Housing: The project will develop 122 for-sale townhomes, consisting of 50 two-bedroom and 72 four-bedroom homes. By providing multi-bedroom layouts, the development offers homeownership opportunities for families with children and intergenerational households, which is consistent with General Plan Policy LU-H.10a.

Urban Design

Buildings: The General Plan Urban Design Element goals support a built environment that respects San Diego's natural environment and climate, and a pattern and scale of development that provides visual diversity, choice of lifestyle, opportunities for social interaction, and that respects desirable community character and context. The project proposes residential buildings that would be three stories, which would help to integrate the new buildings with the existing fabric and scale of the adjacent development, which is consistent with Urban Design Element policy UD-B.1.

Frontages: The General Plan Urban Design Element Policy UD-A.8 supports street frontages with architectural and landscape interest to support the visual appeal of the streets and enhance the pedestrian experience, while minimizing the visual impact of parking on pedestrians and street facades. The project would be consistent with this General Plan policy by incorporating balconies and varying materials and colors to articulate the buildings, add visual interest, and create an inviting pedestrian experience. It would also provide non-contiguous sidewalks and street trees along the street frontage.

Landscaping: The proposed project would plant trees and landscape buffers to maximize pedestrian shade, deliver localized environmental benefits, and effectively screen or minimize the visual impact of on-site parking areas with is also consistent with Policy UD-A.8. The project would be consistent with General Plan Urban Design Element Policy UD-A.10 regarding landscaping by planting trees, placed in a way to absorb stormwater runoff. The project would also be consistent with General Plan Conservation Element Policy CE-A.11 by planting sustainable landscape design, resource conservation, and the expansion of the urban tree canopy through its emphasis on drought-tolerant species and reclaimed water integration.

Mobility

A primary strategy of the General Plan is to reduce dependence on the automobile in order to achieve increasing mobility, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and fostering compact development and a more walkable and bikeable city. The project would be consistent with the Climate Action Plan Measure 3.5, which calls for new developments in Transit Priority Areas where residents can walk, bike, and take transit to help meet City climate goals. The proposed project is a townhome development and is within a Transit Priority Area. The project site is approximately a 1-mile walk from the Rancho Bernardo Transit Station.

Transit Access: The project site is less than 0.4 miles from Bus Route 945, which stops at Bernardo Center Drive and Rancho Bernardo Road and provides direct access to the Rancho Bernardo Transit Station.

Bicycle Network: The project would have on-site bicycle parking and a publicly accessible bicycle repair station with access to the existing Class III routes along Rancho Bernardo Road and Bernardo Center Drive, with planned Class II bicycle facilities on Rancho Bernardo Road and a continued Class III route on Bernardo Center Drive, which would be consistent with General Plan Mobility Element Policy ME-B.4.

Pedestrian Network: The project would improve the pedestrian network by constructing a 14-foot parkway containing eight feet of landscaping and a five-foot-wide non-contiguous sidewalk which would connect to the existing pedestrian sidewalks, which is consistent with General Plan Policy ME-A.6. The project site is 0.1 miles walking distance to the retail goods and services at the Rancho Bernardo Town Center.

Noise

The proposed project would incorporate building and site design noise-attenuation measures to ensure that interior noise levels do not exceed 45 dB CNEL within habitable rooms consistent with General Plan Noise Element Policies NE-A.6 and NE-I.1.

Recreation

The proposed project would provide a 9,000-square-foot common open space, children's play structure, and 0.40-mile perimeter walking trail to incorporate multi-generational recreational amenities within residential developments that meet recreational needs and foster social interaction consistent with General Plan Recreation Element Policy RE-A.10. This would be consistent with the Community Plan's recreational policy that encourages the integration of dedicated, functional recreational areas within multi-family housing developments to improve resident wellness and

enhance the overall quality of the built environment.

Public Facilities

The General Plan establishes the overarching policy framework ensuring that growth pays its fair share toward maintaining and expanding public facilities. The project would be required to pay school impact fees to the Poway Unified School District and development impact fees to the City before the issuance of construction permits to contribute to funding public facility improvements, which is consistent with the General Plan Public Facilities, Services, and Safety Element Policy PF-B.9.

Environmental Analysis:

The project was reviewed for a CEQA Section 21080.66 Statutory Infill Housing Exemption; however, it was determined that the project would not qualify due to not meeting a single-condition. The single-condition not met by the project was consistency with the applicable General Plan and zone in effect at the time the project application was deemed complete. Subsequently, the project's eligibility for a single-condition environmental review was evaluated pursuant to CEQA Section 21080.1(b). It was determined that none of the exclusions under CEQA Section 21080.1(b)(4) applied. Thus, the CEQA review of environmental effects from the project was limited to those effects caused by the single-condition. Accordingly, the City prepared a Single-Condition Negative Declaration pursuant to CEQA. The Single-Condition Negative Declaration concluded that the project would not have a significant effect on the environment, and no mitigation was required. (Attachments 15 and 16).

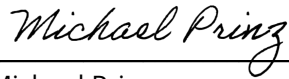
Conclusion:

The project would benefit the Rancho Bernardo community and City through the provision of additional housing opportunities. Staff reviewed the proposed project and provided a Plan Amendment Issues Analysis (Attachment 7), which addresses the issues identified through the Community Plan Amendment Initiation hearing. These issues have been resolved throughout the review process and are in conformance with the adopted policies and regulations of the Land Development Code. Staff has provided draft resolutions, a draft ordinance, and Conditions to support approval of the Project. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission recommend that the City Council approve the project as proposed.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Recommend that the City Council approve adoption of the Single-Condition Negative Declaration, the approval of the General and Community Plan Amendments, the rezone, and the Vesting Tentative Map with modifications.
2. Recommend that the City Council deny adoption of the Single-Condition Negative Declaration, the approval of the General and Community Plan Amendments, the rezone, and the Vesting Tentative Map, if the findings required to approve the project cannot be affirmed.

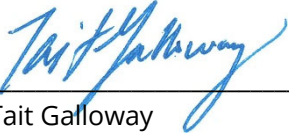
Respectfully submitted,



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Attachments:

1. Community Planning Group Vote
2. Location Map
3. Community Plan Land Use Map
4. Zoning Map
5. Transit Map
6. Bicycle Facilities Map
7. General Plan and Community Plan Amendment Issues Analysis
8. General Plan and Community Plan Amendment Resolution
9. Community Plan Amendment Redlines
10. Draft Ordinance
11. Rezone - B Sheet
12. Vesting Tentative Map
13. Draft Map Resolution with Findings
14. Draft Map Conditions
15. Draft Environmental Resolution (ND)
16. Environmental Document – [Single-Condition Negative Declaration](#)
17. Inclusionary Conditions Letter
18. Ownership Disclosure Statement