



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to the Planning Commission

DATE ISSUED: February 24, 2021 REPORT NO. PC-21-008

HEARING DATE: March 4, 2021

SUBJECT: College Area Community Plan Amendment Initiation for Montezuma Residential CPA

PROJECT NUMBER: 681529

REFERENCE: College Area Community Plan Amendment Initiation for 6650 Montezuma Road, [Planning Commission Report No. PC-17-074](#)
Montezuma Hotel, [Planning Commission Report No. PC-19-017](#)

OWNER/APPLICANT: 52 Blue Falcon, LLC, a California Limited Liability Company

SUMMARY

Issue: Should the Planning Commission INITIATE an amendment to the College Area Community Plan to re-designate the land use from Visitor Commercial to Multifamily Residential and remove the Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone in order to allow for residential and mixed-uses on the 1.86-acre site located at 6650 Montezuma Road?

Staff Recommendation:

1. **INITIATE** the community plan amendment process.

Community Planning Group Recommendation: The College Area Community Planning Board (CACPB) considered the Community Plan Amendment Initiation (CPAI) at their meeting on February 10, 2021 and voted 17-01-01 to continue the initiation of an amendment to the College Area Community Plan and asked the applicant to address concerns related to traffic on Saranac and Mohawk, permanent parking and access for the library, and a lower density and lower height limit (Attachment 1).

Environmental Review: This activity is not a "project" under the definition set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15378. Should initiation of the Community Plan Amendment (CPA) be approved, environmental review would take place at the appropriate time in accordance with CEQA Section 15004.

City Strategic Plan Goal and Objectives: The proposed Community Plan Amendment (CPA) is in direct alignment with the following City of San Diego Strategic Plan goals and objectives; specifically, Goal 2 (Work in partnership with all of our communities to achieve safe and livable neighborhoods) and Goal 3: (Create and sustain a resilient and economically prosperous City).

Fiscal Impact Statement: No fiscal impact. All costs associated with the processing of the application are recovered through a deposit account funded by the applicant.

Code Enforcement Impact: None

Housing Impact Statement: If initiated, subsequent approval of the proposed CPA would allow between 84 and 202 multi-family residential units (45 DU/AC – 110 DU/AC). This does not include the ability for additional affordable housing density bonus residential units.

The initiation of a plan amendment in no way confers adoption of a plan amendment; neither staff nor the Planning Commission is committed to recommend in favor or denial of the proposed amendment, and the City Council is not committed to adopt or deny the proposed amendment.

BACKGROUND

Site Location:

The proposed amendment site is located at 6650 Montezuma within the College Area community planning area (Attachment 2). The College Lutheran Church stood on the site, which is now a vacant parcel with no structure. The site provides driveway access along Montezuma Road and additional parking for the the College-Rolando Library, which is located immediately adjacent to the west; a shared parking agreement between the library and the church allowed for the shared use of parking spaces.

Adjacent Existing Land Uses:

The site is surrounded by a mixture of residential, commercial, and institutional uses. In addition to the College-Rolando Library west of the site, a mix of single-family and multi-family residences are located to the north, a full-service grocery store and other commercial retail uses are located to the east, and retail and multi-family uses are directly south of the amendment site (Attachment 3).

Adjacent Planned Land Uses

The adopted planned land uses surrounding the site are also a mixture of residential, commercial, and institutional uses. The College-Rolando Library west of the site is designated specifically for a library use. The grocery store directly east of the site and some commercial property south of the site on the corner of El Cajon Boulevard and Montezuma Road are designated General Commercial with Residential (75-110 DU/AC). North of the site are designated residential uses: Low Density Residential (1-10 DU/AC) and Low/Med Density Residential (10-15 DU/AC); finally, there is residential property adjacent to the General Commercial south of the site that is designated High Density Residential (45- 75 DU/AC) (Attachment 4).

Transit:

The site is located approximately 0.7 miles away from the Alvarado Medical Center Green Line Trolley Station and 1 mile from the San Diego State University Transit Center; this places the site outside of a Transit Priority Area (TPA), which extend 0.5 miles around these stations. However, the site is within a SANDAG Smart Growth Area boundary due to an existing a high-frequency bus route with peak 15-minute headways (Attachment 5). The site is currently served by Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) local bus routes 1 and 14. Route 1 travels between Fashion Valley Transit Center and La Mesa Boulevard Trolley Station and has peak headways every 15-minutes on El Cajon Boulevard between 67th and 68th Streets with is approximately 0.12 mile from the site. Route 14 travels between the Grantville Trolley Station and Lake Murray Village Shopping Center in La Mesa and has peak headways of one hour at the intersection of Montezuma Road and Reservoir Drive. SANDAG is exploring a next-generation rapid bus route along Montezuma Road and a complete corridor concept along El Cajon Boulevard for the 2021 Regional Transportation Plan.

Bicycle:

Montezuma Road is a 4-lane major street with a class II bicycle lane between the site and SDSU.

Complete Communities: Mobility Choices

The project is located in Complete Communities Mobility Choices Zone 3. Development in Mobility Zone 3 is required to provide Active Transportation Measures to support non-auto modes of transportation like walking, biking, or public transit.

Public Facilities:

The College-Rolando Branch Library is directly adjacent to the site; a shared parking agreement exists, granting the library 25 additional parking spaces. Montezuma Park, the Language Academy Elementary School and Joint Use Park, and Harriet Tubman Village Charter School Joint Use Park are each less than 0.25 miles from the site. The site is 0.7 miles away from San Diego State University campus and 1.1 miles from Hardy Elementary School. Horace Mann Middle School and Will C. Crawford Senior High School, both in Eastern Area, are 2 miles from the site (Attachment 6).

Prior Community Plan Amendment

The College Area Community Plan designates the approximately 1.86-acre site as Visitor Commercial (Attachment 3). This designation was the result of a prior community plan amendment from Low-Medium Density Residential (10-15 du/ac) and General Commercial with Residential (75-110 du/ac) to Visitor Commercial; this community plan amendment was adopted by City Council on June 24, 2019. City Council also approved a rezone from RM-1-1 Zone to the CV-1-1 Zone/ Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone-Type A (CPIOZ) in order to implement this new land use designation. The requirement set forth in the College Area Community Plan for this CPIOZ is that *“Development within the boundaries of the CPIOZ-Type A (shown in Figure 26) shall be limited to Visitor Accommodations uses, which shall not exceed 125 hotel rooms and 125 parking spaces.”* As part of the proposed hotel development the City entered into a new Shared Parking Agreement for the public use of 25 parking spaces for overflow library parking.

Housing & Demographics

As of 2019, SANDAG estimated there were approximately 23,696 people living in the College Area Community Planning Area. This is almost a 15 percent increase from the 2010 SANDAG estimate of 20,661 people. SANDAG estimated that in 2019 the community had 7,845 housing units with a vacancy rate of 5.5 percent and a persons-per-household rate of 2.57. Between 2010 and 2019, the Community has added 490 housing units which is a 6.7 percent increase. In 2010, the Community had 7,355 housing units with a 3.6 percent vacancy rate and persons per household rate of 2.49. Based on data from the San Diego Housing Commission, there are currently 311 affordable housing units within College Planning Area.

| Year | Total Population | Household Population | Vacant Rate | Persons per Household | Dwelling Units |
|------|------------------|----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| 2010 | 20,661 | 17,624 | 3.6% | 2.49 | 7,355 |
| 2019 | 23,696 | 19,031 | 5.5% | 2.57 | 7,845 |

Source: San Diego Association of Governments, 2021

Community Plan Update:

Beginning in March 2020, the Planning Department kicked-off the College Area Community Plan Update. The community plan envisions a “college-village” with vibrant mixed-use corridors and nodes that connect to neighborhoods and the university, and that enhance the community. Guiding principles include language to increase housing near San Diego State University, transit, jobs, and community amenities. The Plan Update has not yet studied land use concepts for the community, but there is general consensus in the community that the commercial corridors should be studied first for future development and additional housing capacity, especially near San Diego State University (SDSU). The Planning Department anticipates presenting land use concepts to the community in Summer 2021. This site is on Montezuma Road, one of the main corridors in the community that will be studied to add additional housing capacity in the community near SDSU.

DISCUSSION

Request

The applicant is requesting an amendment to the community plan land use map to redesignate the property to higher density Multifamily Residential designation, a rezone from CV-1-1 to corresponding zone to implement the land use designation, and removal of the CPIOZ (Attachment 7).

Community Planning Group:

The applicant has attended three Community Planning Group (CPG) meetings to discuss the proposed initiation and the possible future housing development. On January 11, 2021, the applicant presented the proposal to the College Area Community Planning Group Project Review Committee. The Committee voted to continue the item and asked the applicant to come with additional details. The applicant returned on February 4, 2021 and presented additional details to the Project Review Committee. The Committee voted 7-1 to deny the item and asked the applicant to return with a permanent solution to the library parking issue, a lower density, and a zone that did not have unlimited building height. The CPA Initiation

then was presented to the full College Area CPG on February 10, 2021. The CPG voted 17-1-1 to continue this item until the applicant returns with:

1. A plan to address the parking and access issues on a permanent basis rather than the joint-use agreement currently in place;
2. A plan to mitigate the impact of traffic on Saranac and Mohawk streets; and
3. A community plan designation with lower density and height limitations.

Shared Parking Space Agreement

The Shared Parking Agreement for the public use of 25 parking spaces for overflow library parking that the City entered into with the applicant for the approved hotel development will still be in place should a future multifamily development be approved. The community has expressed concern that the 25 parking spaces will be unmarked and could be taken by future residents during the day, and indicated their preference for the City to obtain property needed to provide the 25 parking spaces. The City does not have the funding to purchase the property. As part of the amendment process, staff will continue to work with the applicant to identify measures to ensure the spaces are available to library patrons. This could include signage and pavement markings.

Access from Montezuma Road

The College-Rolando Library had a prior share access driveway from Montezuma Road with the College Lutheran Church. The Community has expressed concern that this driveway would be closed during the construction of the potential development and that this could cause traffic impacts on Mohawk Street which provide access to the Library parking area. As part of the amendment process, staff would continue to work with the applicant to address access concerns.

Density

The community has expressed concern that a density range between 75-110 dwelling units per acre and building height would be out of character for the site. As addressed in the Background Section, the site is adjacent to property designated for multifamily which includes 10-15 dwelling units per acre along Mohawk, 45-75 dwelling units per acre dwelling units per acre along Montezuma Road and 45-110 along El Cajon Boulevard. The applicant is requesting to initiate an amendment that contemplates a density range between 45 and 110 dwelling units per acre. As part of the amendment process, staff would continue to work with the applicant to determine the density for the development and applicable zone.

Height

The community has expressed concern that a density range between 75-110 dwelling units per acre would use the RM-4-10 zone and resulting building height would be out of scale for the site. The RM 4-10 zone allows up to 109 units per acre and it does not have a maximum build height limit. The RM-3-9 zone allows up to 73 units per acre and it limits building heights to 60 feet. The adjacent RM-1-1 zone limits building heights to 30 feet along Mohawk, RM-3-8 zone limits building height to 50 feet along Montezuma Road and the CU-2-3 zone limits building heights to 50 feet along El Cajon Boulevard. The current CV-1-1 zone limits building heights to 60 feet on the property. As part of the amendment process, staff would continue to work the applicant to determine the height for the development and applicable zone. CPIOZ could also be used to limit building height with the RM-4-10 zone. Staff will also work with the applicant to evaluate the use of architectural features to reduce the bulk and scale with building step backs to provide a transition along Mohawk Street and adjacent to to the Library.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Amenities

As part of the amendment process, staff will work with the applicant to include pedestrian and bicycle amenities to support the ability for residents to walk, bike or take transit to destinations in the community.

Public Space

The applicant is proposing commercial ground level space. As part of the amendment process, staff will work with the applicant to include outdoor public space as part of the site and building design to support pedestrian activities and the commercial space.

Affordable Housing

The applicant is proposing to provide affordable housing on-site. As part of the amendment process, staff

will work with the applicant to address the specific aspects of the proposal.

Initiation Criteria

The City is unique among jurisdictions in that the process to amend the General Plan and/or a community plan requires either a Planning Commission or City Council initiation before a plan amendment process and accompanying project may proceed. Community plans are components of the City's General Plan. The staff recommendation of approval or denial of the initiation is based upon compliance with all three of the initiation criteria contained in the General Plan. The Planning Department has provided an overview of how the following initiation criteria are addressed by the proposed amendment:

A. The amendment request appears to be consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan and community plan and any community plan specific amendment criteria.

The proposed amendment site is located adjacent to the El Cajon Boulevard commercial corridor and serves as a transition between predominantly commercial uses to the east and residential uses to the west and north. The College Area Community Plan includes a variety of goals and policies relating to residential and mixed-use development, for which the proposed amendment would be consistent. This proposal intends to provide a mixed-use project including multi-family housing and a ground floor commercial component that is suitable to the project site and its location within the College Area Community Plan Area. Recommendations in the College Area Community Plan are consistent with what is proposed.

The recommendation for commercial land uses 1.a. recommends to *“Permit residential uses as part of multiple use projects at densities of 45-110 dwelling units per acre. Residential development should be located above, behind, or next to commercial uses. Residential uses will help to upgrade the area by turning it into a place where people are present 24 hours a day and a place where people live as well as shop.”*

The proposed amendment would help implement the Community Plan's Commercial Goal by extending the commercial designation to provide a range of retail sales and service facilities to adequately serve the community. The proposed designation's density range would help implement the Community Plan's Residential Objectives by identifying areas appropriate for multi-family development and identifying appropriate density range. Additionally, the proposed amendment would be consistent with community plan policy that recommends areas north of El Cajon Boulevard provide a buffer between uses such as commercial and residential uses or between residential uses of different intensities.

The City of Villages strategy focuses growth into mixed-use activity centers that are pedestrian-friendly districts linked to an improved regional transit system. The General Plan Village Propensity map identifies this site to be in the medium to high propensity range. Village Propensity is based upon existing and community plan-designated land uses, existing and planned public facilities, existing and planned transit service, and environmental constraints. A multifamily residential project on this site, near transit, public facilities and spaces, retail and services is consistent with the City of San Diego General Plan "City of Villages" growth strategy. The proposed initiation also would implement General Plan policies for balanced communities including:

- Provide affordable housing throughout the City so that no single area experiences a disproportionate concentration. (LU-H.2)
- Maintain or increase the City's supply of land designated for various residential densities as community plans are being prepared, updated, or amended. (LU-C.3)

The General Plan also has policies that aim to provide a variety of housing types and sizes with varying levels of affordability in residential and village developments and different types of land uses within a community to offer a diverse mix of uses. The proposed amendment would include affordable housing opportunities consistent with policies in the Housing Element of the General Plan, including:

- Seek attainment of community balance with respect to utilization of affordable housing resources. (HE-1.1)
- Encourage location of affordable housing opportunities throughout all sections of the City by encouraging mixed-income development. (HE-1.8)

The proposed plan amendment is consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan and community plan as it would provide mixed-use development including affordable housing in an appropriate location within the College Area Community Plan Area.

B. The proposed amendment provides additional public benefit to the community as compared to the existing land use designation, density/intensity range, plan policy or site design.

The proposed amendment provides additional public benefit to the community as compared to the existing land use designation by allowing for a mixed-use, higher density multi-family residential development, including affordable housing and ground floor commercial use near SDSU and along a major commercial and transit corridor. This land use designation would add housing capacity.

The proposed amendment would benefit the community by providing additional housing opportunities, including affordable housing units, during a time at which the City Council has declared a housing state of emergency. The proposed amendment would also amend the existing CPIOZ and allow residential development with pedestrian oriented ground floor commercial uses adjacent to an existing commercial center. The development would allow future residents to live in close proximity to commercial goods and services, SDSU and schools, employment, and transit consistent with the General Plan City of Villages strategy.

C. Public facilities appear to be available to serve the proposed increase in density/intensity, or their provision will be addressed as a component of the amendment process.

The College Area Community planning area is an urbanized community and all necessary public services appear to be available. If the amendment to the Community Plan is initiated, an analysis of public services and facilities would be conducted with the review of the amendment.

CONCLUSION

As outlined above, it is staff's recommendation that the proposed initiation meets all of the criteria as described. The following land use issues have been identified by City staff. If initiated, these issues, as well as other that may be identified, would be analyzed and evaluated through the community plan amendment review process:

- Appropriate land use designation, density range, and associated zoning for the site;
- Building and site design that addresses height, bulk, scale, massing and transitions along the Mohawk Street and College-Rolando Library frontages.
- Building and site design that includes pedestrian and bicycle amenities, public spaces, and pedestrian-scale elements; and
- Measures to help ensure that shared parking are available to the College-Rolando Library patrons when the Library is open.

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,

Nathen Causman

Nathen Causman
Associate Planner
Planning Department

Tait Galloway

Tait Galloway
Program Manager
Planning Department

Attachments:

1. College Area Community Planning Group Recommendation
2. Aerial View of the Amendment Area
3. Existing Land Uses
4. Community Plan Land Uses
5. Transit Prior Area Map
6. Public Facilities Map
7. Applicant's Initiation Request Letter

From: [Jose Reynoso](#)
To: [Causman, Nathen](#); [Jennings Jim](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] FW: Feb 10 CACPB motion
Date: Saturday, February 13, 2021 8:01:16 AM

This email came from an external source. Be cautious about clicking on any links in this email or opening attachments.

FYI

-----Original Message-----

From: Ann Cottrell [<mailto:acottrell@sdsu.edu>]
Sent: Friday, February 12, 2021 4:12 PM
To: Reynoso Jose <jsreynoso@cox.net>; Hintzman Jan <hintzman@cox.net>
Subject: Feb 10 CACPB motion

(Montana made some good points which will be in the minutes Here is just the motion

Jennings Move to continue this item until the Blue Falcon Atlantis group brings us the following:
Murphree secibd

1. a plan of how it plans to protect the parking and access to the library on a permanent basis rather than on existing joint use agreement
2. a plan for mitigating the traffic impact on Saranac and Mohawk streets
3. a community plan designation with lower densities and a higher limit more consistent with the surrounding area and the community plan update

Jim said the vote was 14 yes, but I counted the roll call
17 yes, 1 no 1 abstain (+ 1 absent)

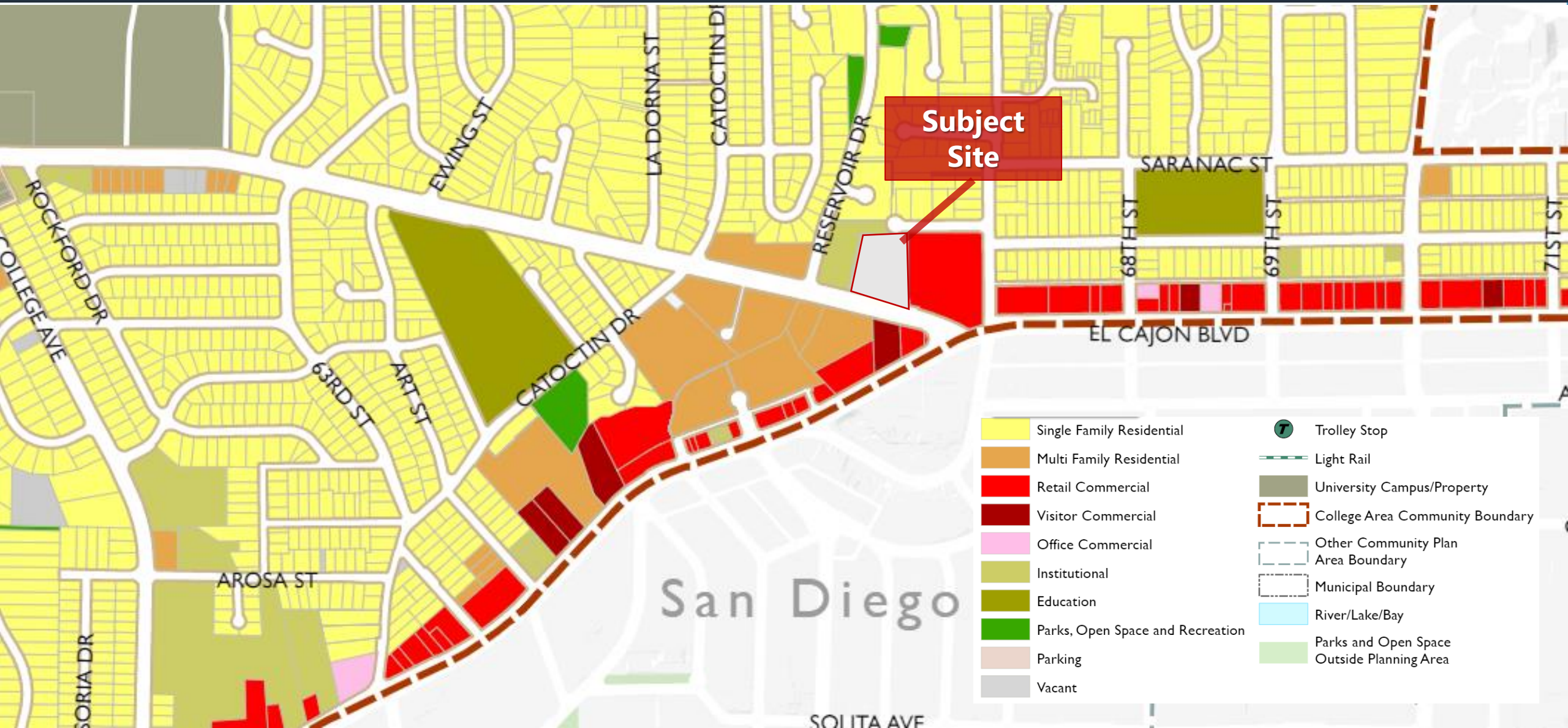
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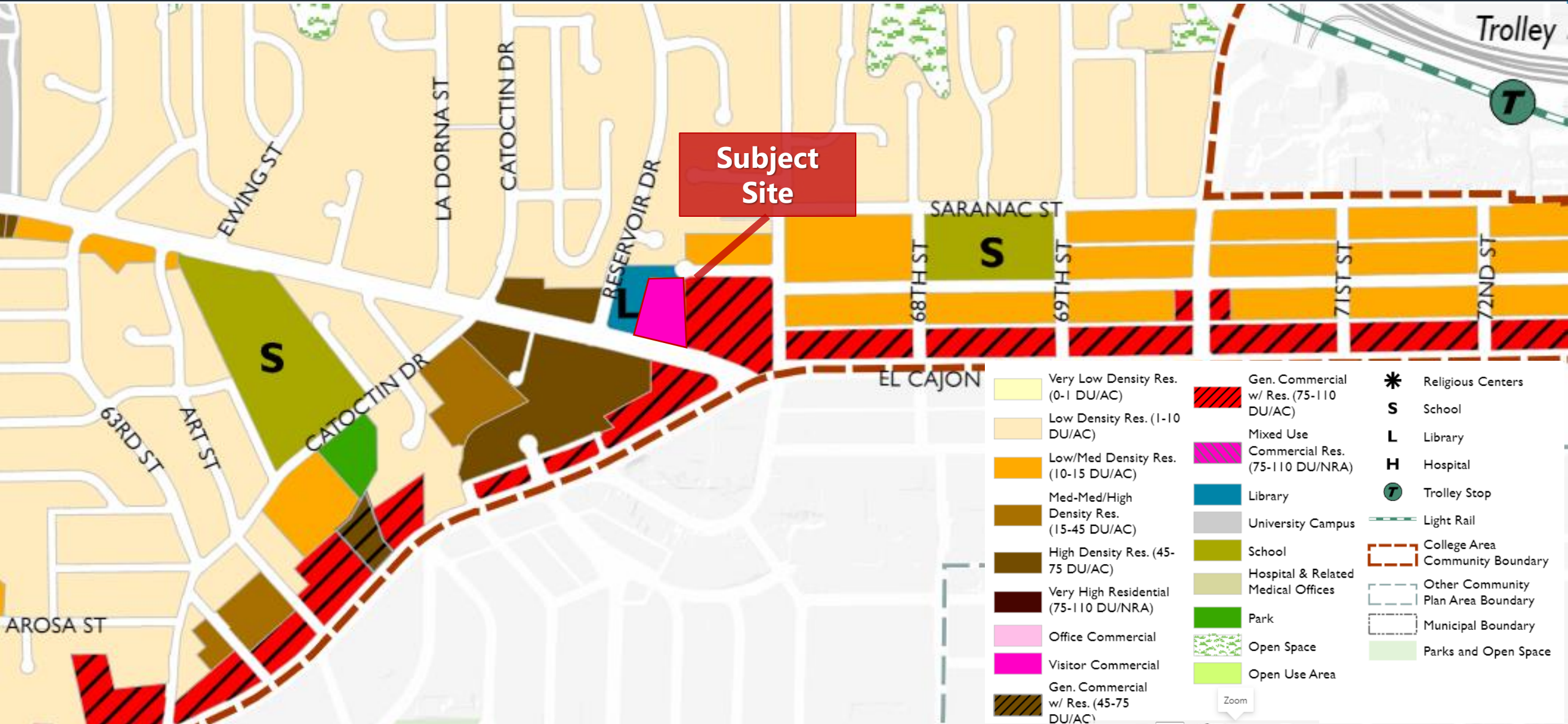
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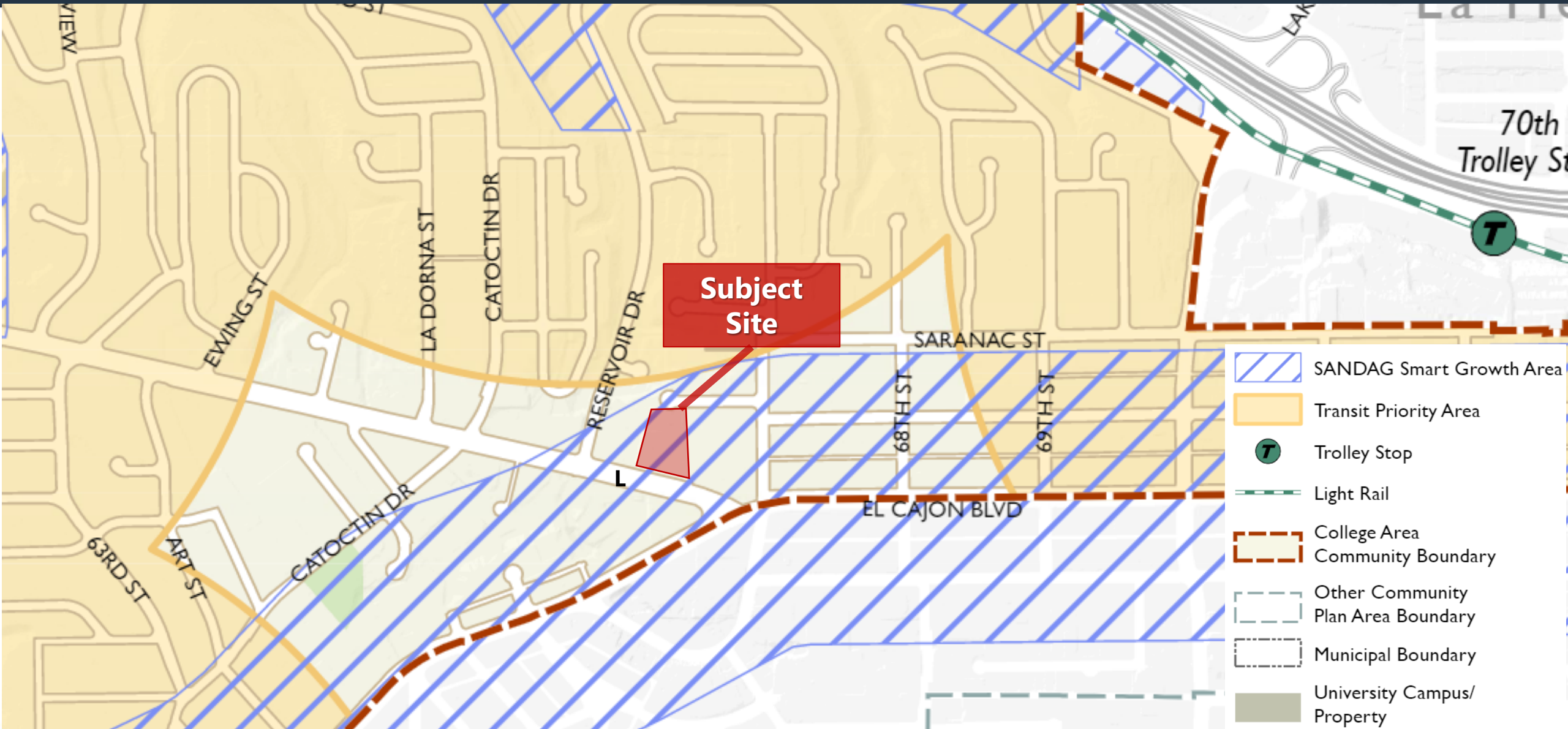
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6650 Montezuma Road













2488 Historic Decatur Rd, Suite 220 (619) 523-1930 AtlantisSD.com
San Diego, CA 92106

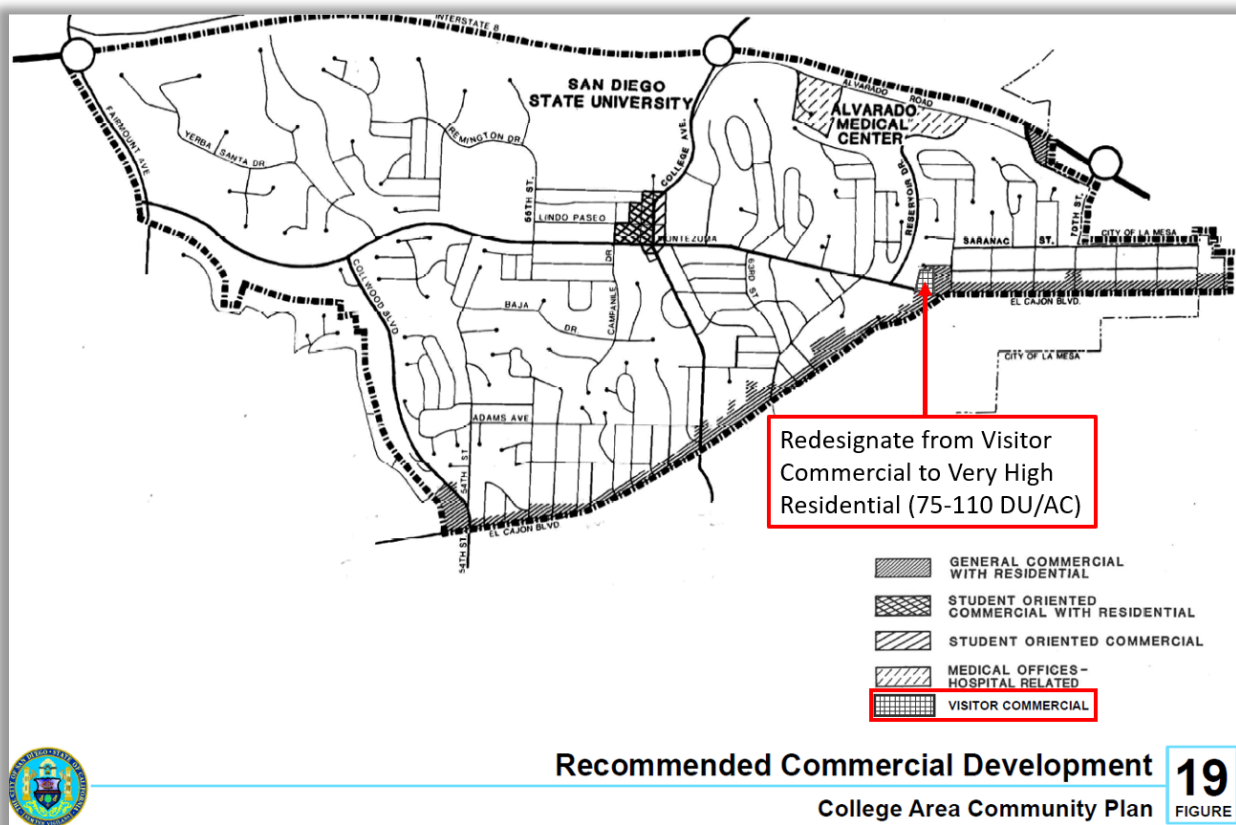
December 30, 2020

Mr. Nathen Causman, Deputy Director
Planning Department
City of San Diego
9485 Aero Drive
San Diego, CA 92123

Re: College Area Community Plan Amendment Initiation Request for 6650 Montezuma Road

Dear Mr. Causman:

Shahin Edalatdju, applicant for 6650 Montezuma Road in the College Area Community of the City of San Diego, requests the initiation of an amendment to the College Area Community Plan. The request is to move forward with a Community Plan Amendment (CPA) Initiation to re-designate the site from Visitor Commercial to Very High Residential (75-110 DU/AC). The existing land use designation is shown in Figure 19 of the College Area Community Plan (mark-up added for illustrative purposes).



If the initiation is approved, the amendment application will be accompanied by a request to rezone the property from the CV-1-1 zone to the CC-3-9 zone. As a part of this CPA initiation request, we would also like to request that the residential density may be reduced to a lower level if there are design constraints that do not allow for the level of density being requested. The site currently has a Community Plan Implementation Overlay Zone Type A (CPIOZ A) on the site which will also be requested to be removed as a part of the Community Plan Amendment and Rezone action.

Initiation Criteria

The proposed land use plan amendment is compliant with the three initiation criteria found in the General Plan, LU-D.10:

1. The amendment request appears to be consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan and community plan and any specific amendment criteria;

The College Area Community Plan includes a variety of goals and policies relating to residential and mixed-use development, for which the proposed amendment would be consistent. This proposal intends to provide a mixed-use project including multi-family housing and a ground floor commercial component that is suitable to the project site and its location within the College Area Community Plan Area. Recommendations in the College Area Community Plan are consistent with what is proposed.

The recommendation for commercial land uses 1.a. recommends to “Permit residential uses as part of multiple use projects at densities of 45-110 dwelling units per acre. Residential development should be located above, behind, or next to commercial uses. Residential uses will help to upgrade the area by turning it into a place where people are present 24 hours a day and a place where people live as well as shop.”

The General Plan Village Propensity map also identifies this site to be in the medium to high propensity range. The proposal would implement General Plan policies for balanced communities including:

- Provide affordable housing throughout the City so that no single area experiences a disproportionate concentration. (LU-H.2)
- Maintain or increase the City’s supply of land designated for various residential densities as community plans are being prepared, updated, or amended. (LU-C.3)

The General Plan also has policies that aim to provide a variety of housing types and sizes with varying levels of affordability in residential and village developments and different types of land uses within a community to offer a diverse mix of uses. The proposed amendment would include affordable housing opportunities consistent with policies in the Housing Element of the General Plan, including:

- Seek attainment of community balance with respect to utilization of affordable housing resources. (HE-1.1)
- Encourage location of affordable housing opportunities throughout all sections of the City by encouraging mixed-income development. (HE-1.8)

The proposed plan amendment is consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan and community plan as it would provide mixed-use development including affordable housing in an appropriate location within the College Area Community Plan Area.

2. The proposed amendment provides additional public benefit to the community as compared to the existing land use designation, density/intensity range, plan policies or site design; and

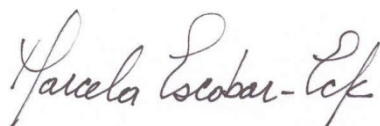
The proposed amendment provides additional public benefit to the community as compared to the existing land use designation by allowing for a mixed-use, higher density multi-family residential development, including affordable housing and ground floor commercial use. This land use designation would add housing capacity.

3. Public Facilities appear to be available to serve the proposed increase in density/intensity, or their provisions will be addressed as a component of the amendment process.

Public facilities are available to serve the proposed increase in density at 6650 Montezuma Road. This amendment applies to an infill site in the college area where public facilities are currently available. Montezuma Road has four lanes and bus stations service two lines are within a quarter-mile distance.

We look forward to the Community Plan Amendment Initiation hearing before Planning Commission.

Best regards,



Marcela Escobar-Eck
Atlantis Group
Principal

Attachments

1. General Application Package
 - General Application
 - Deposit Account
 - Ownership Disclosure Statement
 - Grant Deed
 - Affordable Housing Requirements

CC: Mr. Tait Galloway, Program Manager