

DATE ISSUED: January 28, 2005

REPORT NO. P-05-031

ATTENTION: Planning Commission
Agenda of February 3, 2005

SUBJECT: **General/Community Plan Amendment Initiation – 4883, 4905, & 4915 Catoctin Drive – Project No. 54691:** Initiation of an amendment to the Progress Guide and General Plan and College Area Community Plan to redesignate an approximate 2.18-acre site from Low Residential (1 to 10 du/ac) to Low-Medium Residential (10 to 15 du/ac).

OWNER/
APPLICANT: Carter Reese & Associates

SUMMARY:

Issue – Should the Planning Commission INITIATE an amendment to the Progress Guide and General Plan and College Area Community Plan pursuant to Municipal Code Section 122.0103? An amendment to the Progress Guide and General Plan and College Area Community Plan has been requested to allow for the redesignation of approximately 2.18 acres from Low Residential (1 to 10 dwelling units to the acre) to Low-Medium Residential (10 to 15 dwelling units to the acre).

Staff Recommendation – INITIATE the plan amendment process.

Community Planning Group Recommendation – At the regularly scheduled and noticed planning committee meeting of January 13, 2005, the College Area Community Council voted 17-0-0 to recommend initiation of a General/Community Plan amendment (see Attachment 1).

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

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

Housing Impact Statement – The request to redesignate an approximate 2.18-acre site would allow the potential construction of 22 to 33 dwelling units. Based on the existing land use designation, 2 to 22 units would be allowed. Any potential development on the site would result in the removal of one existing single-family residence. If initiated, impacts to housing availability and affordability would be evaluated.

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

BACKGROUND

The subject property is a 2.18-acre site located south of Catoctin Drive between Art Street and the Montezuma Neighborhood Park in the College Area community planning area (see Attachment 2). A single-family residence currently occupies a portion of the site, while the larger remaining area, which was formerly planned for a special education school facility, has been previously graded and now lies vacant. A mix of residential, institutional, park, and commercial land uses surround the site. Immediately to the east of the site is the 1.56-acre Montezuma Neighborhood Park; located north of the site across Catoctin Drive is the Language Academy School; to the west is a single-family residence; and to the south along El Cajon Boulevard is a commercial structure.

The College Area Community Plan designates the 2.18-acre site for Low Residential at 1 to 10 dwelling units to the acre (see Attachment 3). The applicant has requested a General/Community Plan amendment to increase residential densities on the 2.18-acre site to 10 to 15 dwelling units per acre to allow 30 new housing units to be constructed on site (see Attachment 4). Under the existing land use designation, 2 to 22 dwelling units could be developed on site. The proposed land use amendment would allow between 22 to 33 dwelling units on site. The 30-unit project would result in a density of 14 dwelling units per acre.

Other General/Community Plan Amendments in Process

Within the College Area Community planning areas there are currently two General/Community Plan amendments in process. These include the Mesa Commons as well as the Paseo projects.

- Mesa Commons Project

There is currently an existing General/Community Plan Amendment and rezone in process immediately adjacent to the west of the site which has also been proposed by the applicant (see Attachment 5). The Mesa Commons Project, which consists of a 52-unit mixed-use project that fronts both El Cajon Boulevard on the south and Catoctin Drive on the north. The project is proposing to redesignate 1.19 acres of the project site along El Cajon Boulevard from General Commercial with High to Very High Residential at 45 to 110 dwelling units to the acre to General Commercial with Medium to Medium High Residential at 15 to 45 dwelling units to the acre. In addition, the remaining 1.07 acres located along

Catoctin Drive is proposed to be redesignated from Low Residential at 1 to 10 dwelling units to the acre to Low to Medium Residential at 10 to 15 dwelling units to the acre. The proposed project was recommended for approval to the City Council by the Planning Commission on December 2, 2004.

Two weeks prior to the time the proposed Mesa Commons Project was brought before the Planning Commission, staff was informed by the applicant that the owners of the Aseltine School would no longer be proceeding with their school facility and that the applicant was intending to acquire the site for development. Staff initially felt that the two projects should be combined, however by that time the project had been publicly noticed and the entitlement plans were already prepared for the hearing. Therefore, the project could not be delayed in order to incorporate a redesign of the project and the analysis of additional development areas. Staff met with the applicant and determined that a separate General/Community Plan Amendment process and rezone would be required as part of their development.

- Paseo Project

The Paseo is a proposed 465-unit, mixed-use project processing a General/Community Plan amendment adjacent to the San Diego State University (SDSU) campus at the intersection of Montezuma Road and College Avenue. The 10.15-acre project proposes to redesignate the site from mixed-use Commercial/Residential at 75 to 110 dwelling units per acre to mixed-use Commercial/Residential 45 to 75 dwelling units per acre; redesignate the 1.15-acre state-owned property from University Campus to mixed-use Commercial/Residential 45 to 75 dwelling units per acre; reclassify College Avenue as four-lane major roadway; and increase the maximum building heights along College Avenue, north of Montezuma road, from five to six stories. The project is currently under review by City staff.

Other development projects in the College Community include the SDSU Transit Station which will be part of the Mission Valley East Trolley line located on the university campus and the new 15,222 square foot College-Rolando Library located on the northeast corner of Montezuma Road and Montezuma Drive. Both projects are scheduled for completion later this year.

If initiated, the proposed General/Community Plan amendment would be reviewed in conjunction with a request to rezone the 2.18-acre site from RS-1-7 to RM-1-1. Additional discretionary permits would be determined by Development Services Department staff upon further review of a proposed development project.

DISCUSSION

Before a General/Community Plan amendment can initiated, Section 122.0104 of the Municipal Code requires that any one of the 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 a the applicant by denying any reasonable use of the subject property.**

The Planning Department, does however, believe that all 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 College Area Community Plan.**

The proposed plan amendment embodies the goals and objectives contained in the Progress Guide and General Plan for redeveloping and rehabilitating underutilized areas of the City and the improvement of the neighborhood environment to increase personal safety, comfort, pride and opportunity. In addition, the proposed plan amendment meets goals and objectives in the Strategic Framework Element for promoting the potential for new housing opportunities within walking distance from schools, parks, transit, commercial, and employment centers.

The proposed land use amendment meets objectives of the Residential Element of the College Area Community Plan for identifying areas for multi-family residential development and identifying density levels for multi-family development in order to ensure compatibility with existing single-family neighborhoods, where maintaining the predominant single-family character of the community is an overall goal. The increase in residential density associated with the General/Community Plan amendment is proposed in an area undergoing transition. As mentioned previously, the subject site lies adjacent to where the proposed Mesa Commons Project is to be developed and intends to maintain the same proposed density (Medium to Medium High Residential 15 to 45 dwelling units to the acre) along Catoctin Drive. The proposed land use amendment would concentrate additional multi-family development in an area that is being proposed for higher density development especially in close proximity to the El Cajon Boulevard commercial corridor.

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

The proposed plan amendment would allow for the creation of additional home ownership and rental housing opportunities within the College Area community all within close proximity to a major bus transit corridor. The proposed amendment would allow medium density residential development to concentrate in close proximity to transit facilities and commercial services along El Cajon Boulevard. In addition, the 2.18-acre site is located within the Crossroads Redevelopment Project Area and would contribute to the redevelopment and revitalization of the area.

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

Library, Fire, and Police services are currently in place and are provided by the City of San Diego. The proposed increase in density would be served by the new College-Rolando Library which is scheduled for completion later this year. Police services in the College area community are provided by the Mid-City Police Division and fire protection services would be provided by Fire Station 10, located approximately one half mile from the site. Any potential development associated with the proposed land use amendment would have access to existing public water and sewer services located within the area. If initiated, any impacts to services would be analyzed during review of the proposed 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 would be paid for by the applicant.

CONCLUSION

Planning Department staff recommends that the amendment process be initiated to study the issues and impacts related to the proposed land use change from Low Residential 1 to 10 dwelling units to the acre to Low-Medium Residential 10 to 15 dwelling units to the acre.

The following 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 General/Community Plan amendment review process:

- Compatibility between the proposed General/Community Plan amendment and City's General Plan and Strategic Framework Element and Transit-Oriented Development design guidelines
- Comparison of current land use and zoning designations with the proposed land use and zoning designations
- Impacts of structure height(s) and architectural character on surrounding development
- Impacts on community circulation system to determine if any circulation improvements would be necessary
- Impacts to housing availability and affordability
- Impacts to park and open space resources
- Feasibility of expanding adjacent park acres with new development
- Provision of pedestrian amenities and streetscape improvements associated with new residential and commercial structures
- Feasibility of creating pedestrian linkages from new development and the neighborhood park
- Feasibility of integrating new development with the adjacent development project in order to encourage pedestrian connectivity between development and existing uses
- Development impacts on surrounding single-family neighborhood character

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 General/Community Plan amendment, neither staff nor the Planning Commission are committed to recommend in favor or denial of the proposed amendment.**

ALTERNATIVES

Find the proposed land use plan amendment does not meet the criteria as described and deny the General/Community Plan amendment initiation request.

Respectfully Submitted,

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- Attachments:
1. College Area Community Council Recommendation of January 13, 2005
 2. Aerial Location Map
 3. Community Plan Map
 4. Proposed General/Community Land Use Map
 5. Adjacent General/Community Plan amendment
 6. Ownership Disclosure Statement