

DATE ISSUED: March 4, 2005

REPORT NO. P-05-066

ATTENTION: Planning Commission
Agenda of March 10, 2005

SUBJECT: **General/Community Plan Amendment Initiation – 47th Street and Fairmount Avenue– Project No. 46679:** Initiation of an amendment to the Progress Guide and General Plan and Mid-City Communities Plan to redesignate an approximate 1.28-acre site from Industrial to Residential (6 to 10 du/ac).

OWNER/
APPLICANT: Univest Corporation

SUMMARY:

Issue – Should the Planning Commission INITIATE an amendment to the Progress Guide and General Plan and Mid-City Communities Plan pursuant to Municipal Code Section 122.0103? An amendment to the Progress Guide and General Plan and Mid-City Communities Plan has been requested to allow for the redesignation of approximately 1.28 acres from Industrial to Residential (6 to 10 dwelling units per acre).

Staff Recommendation – INITIATE the plan amendment process.

Community Planning Group Recommendation – At the regularly scheduled and noticed planning committee meeting of November 1st, 2004, the City Heights Area Planning Committee voted 14-2-0 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 Mid-City Communities Plan designates the 1.28-acre subject site for Industrial (see Attachment 2). Based on the existing land use designation, no residential dwelling units would be allowed. The request to redesignate the site to Residential at 6 to 10 dwelling units per acre would allow the potential construction of 7 to 13 dwelling units where none currently exist (see Attachment 3). 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 vacant 1.28-acre site located south of Chollas Parkway between 47th Street and Fairmount Avenue within the City Heights area of the Mid-City Communities planning area (see Attachment 4). The existing topography of the site varies, consisting mainly of steep hillside, which slopes downward from 47th Street towards the Oak Park Branch of Chollas Creek located approximately 300 feet west of the subject site. Surrounding land uses include Industrial designated areas to the south and northwest of the site across Fairmount Avenue, while areas designated for Mobile Home Park and Residential are located to the north and to the east. Existing uses in the vicinity include the Leisureland mobile home park to the north and single-family residences to the east across 47th Street. The Sunshine-Berardini ball fields, a church, the Webster Elementary School, as well as various industrial-commercial uses are located south of the subject site (see Attachment 5).

The site is currently zoned of RS-1-7, which solely allows for single-family residential development. Although, the existing zoning does not implement the plan recommended land use, the industrial land use designation along Home Avenue, Federal Boulevard, and 47th Street has been in place since the adoption of the 1984 version of the community plan. This land use designation was applied to this area prior to the construction of the Fairmount Avenue bridge which physically separates the site from the rest of the industrial designated properties and existing industrial-commercial uses located closer to Federal Boulevard. However, this older version of the community plan also envisioned that alternative uses to these Industrial-designated lands could include residential under the existing R1-5000 zone which was a previous single-family residential zone for the area allowing one unit per 5,000 square feet. The current equivalent base zone to R1-5000 is the RS-1-7 zone.

Other General/Community Plan Amendments in Process

Within the Mid-City Communities planning area there are currently three General/Community Plan amendments in process (see Attachment 6).

- Vista Colina

The 3.39-acre Vista Colina project proposes to develop a 90-unit multi-family residential project along the east side of 54th Street between 54th Place and University Avenue in the Eastern Area. The project is processing a General/Community Plan amendment to

redesignate the 3.39-acre site from Residential 11 to 15 dwelling units per acre to Residential 26 to 30 dwelling units per acre. The proposed General/Community Plan amendment process associated with this project was initiated by the Planning Commission on October 16, 2003 and is currently under review by City staff.

- Auburn Park

The 2.3-acre Auburn Park project is located in the community of City Heights and proposes to construct 69 affordable housing units along with a 0.70-acre pocket park at the southwest corner of 52nd Street and University Avenue. The General/Community Plan amendment associated with this project proposes to redesignate the 2.3-acre site from Industrial to Residential 21 to 25 dwelling units per acre. The Auburn Park project was initiated at Planning Commission on July 22, 2004 and is currently under review by City staff.

- San Diego Model School Development Project

The San Diego Model School Development project is located in the community of City Heights and proposes to redevelop a 30.75-acre site adjacent to the proposed Florence Griffith-Joyner Elementary School. The project would incorporate a mixture of uses including 509 dwelling units consisting of for-sale and affordable housing units, along with the development of open space, commercial, and park uses. On June 28, 2004 the City Council initiated the General/Community Plan amendment process for this project. At this time no revised development proposals have been submitted to the City for review.

If initiated, the proposed General/Community Plan amendment would be reviewed in conjunction with additional discretionary permits which would be determined by Development Services Department staff upon further review of a proposed development project.

DISCUSSION

Before a General/Community Plan amendment can be 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 Mid-City Communities Plan.

The proposed land use plan amendment embodies the goals and objectives contained in the Progress Guide and General Plan for redeveloping and rehabilitating underutilized areas of the City; objectives in the Housing Element and Strategic Framework Element for increasing housing opportunities for existing and future residents of all income groups; and continuing to identify areas for residential development including already developed areas where existing development patterns should either be maintained or altered. In addition, the proposed plan amendment meets goals and objectives in the Strategic Framework Element for promoting potential new housing opportunities within walking distance from schools, parks, transit, commercial, and employment centers.

The proposed land use amendment also meets the recommendation found in the Industrial Element of the Progress Guide and General Plan for the evaluation and consideration of the removal of all inappropriately zoned and/or designated industrial lands within the City's industrial inventory. Although the industrial-designated properties adjacent to the site were envisioned for the development of general industrial uses such parts suppliers, machine shops, cleaning and dyeing works, building contractors, boat and motorcycle manufacturers, and beverage bottlers and distributors, these sites are located adjacent to uses which could be adversely impacted. These uses consist of single-family residences, a mobile home park, a church, and elementary school that currently exist within close proximity to the project site. Further, the site along with other vacant industrial-designated properties to the south were envisioned to provide for a larger, contiguous area for industrial uses to locate. However, in the 1990's the new alignment of Fairmount Avenue was completed and now not only bisects this area, but discourages the location of industrial uses requiring large areas of land and isolates the subject site from other industrial-designated properties to the south. The consideration and evaluation of a land use amendment from Industrial to Residential for the site, and the possible redesignation of adjacent and vacant industrial-designated properties, could result in a future land use pattern that is more consistent and compatible with the existing surrounding land uses.

The redesignation of the site from Industrial to Residential could however, adversely affect the Mid-City Communities Plan's goal of providing areas for manufacturing and assembly development, which potentially could bring more jobs and affordable goods to the community, and the Progress Guide and General Plan's goals of protecting manufacturing lands from encroachment by non-manufacturing uses. The proposed land use amendment would limit the availability of industrially-designated lands within the Mid-City Planning Area suitable for manufacturing and assembly. If initiated, the identification and suitability of other sites to

accommodate industrial development as well as the viability to support additional industrial development in the City Heights area would be considered as part of the issues analysis of the proposed General/Community Plan amendment.

According to the Residential Element of the Mid-City Communities Plan, the proposed land use amendment would meet the recommendation in the plan for encouraging new housing development in a variety of types and sizes in order to meet the needs of future residents in all socio-economic brackets and encourage homeownership opportunities. The proposed land use amendment would allow the potential development of 7 to 13 dwelling units were currently none are allowed per the community plan.

Given that the site consists mainly of steep hillsides within close proximity of the Oak Park Branch of Chollas Creek, any development whether residential or industrial could adversely affect goals in the Natural and Cultural Resources Element of the community plan that desire to protect and preserve canyon, hillside, slopes, and creek-side areas from urban encroachment and conflicting uses. (see Attachment 7). As part of the General/Community Plan amendment analysis process, should it be initiated, the applicant's development proposal would be evaluated on its ability to maintain and/or contribute to the area's environmental quality.

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

The proposed land use amendment could result in a land use that is compatible and harmonious with the adjacent residential uses within close proximity to the site, and therefore would not expose existing residents to the negative externalities typically associated with industrial uses. Additionally, the proposed plan amendment would allow for the addition of 7-13 single-family residential units to the City Heights housing inventory and provide additional homeownership opportunities within this community which would further the goals within the Residential Element of the Mid-City Communities Plan. The site's proximity to the Oak Park Branch of Chollas Creek could also present opportunities for improvement, enhancement, and restoration of the creek and open space areas per the Chollas Creek Enhancement Program.

(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. Police services in Mid-City are provided by the Mid-City Police Division and fire protection services would be provided by Fire Station 26, located approximately 2 miles 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 public services

would be analyzed during review of the proposed amendment to ensure that facility needs generated by the proposal will be addressed.

(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 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 Industrial to Residential (6 to 10 dwelling units per acre).

The following land use 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 process, 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 and proposed land use for the subject site
- Viability of developing additional Industrial uses on the subject site and on other vacant Industrial designated areas within the vicinity
- Evaluation of remaining Industrial areas adjacent to the site for potential redesignation
- 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 Chollas Creek, park, and open space resources
- Ability of the project to maintain and/or contribute to the area's environmental quality

- Provision of pedestrian amenities and streetscape improvements associated with new residential development
- Project relationships to transit
- Ability for the project to provide additional recreational amenities as part of the development proposal
- Impacts to public facilities and services including public schools

Although staff believes that the proposed amendment meets the necessary criteria for initiation, staff has not fully reviewed the applicant’s current development proposal. **Therefore, by initiating this General/Community Plan amendment, neither the staff nor Planning Commission are committed to recommend in favor or denial of the proposed amendment.**

Respectfully Submitted,

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 Planning Department

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MPW/MIP

- Attachments:
1. City Heights Area Planning Committee (CHAPC) recommendation of November 1, 2004.
 2. Existing Community Plan Land Use Map
 3. Proposed General/Community Plan Amendment
 4. Mid-City Communities Plan Map
 5. Aerial Location Map
 6. Other General/Community Plan Amendments in progress
 7. Site Photo
 8. Ownership Disclosure Statement