

DATE ISSUED: July 22, 2005

REPORT NO. P-05-181

ATTENTION: Planning Commission
Agenda of July 28, 2005

SUBJECT: **General/Community Plan Amendment Initiation – 4260 54th Street–
Project No. 68157:** Initiation of an amendment to the Progress Guide and
General Plan and Mid-City Communities Plan to redesignate an
approximate 1.5-acre site from Residential (21 to 25 du/ac) to Commercial
and Mixed-Use (44 to 73 du/ac).

OWNER/
APPLICANT: Johnny Pham and Leon Pham

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 1.5 acres from Residential (21 to 25 dwelling units per acre) to Commercial and Mixed-Use (44 to 73 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 July 6, 2005, the City Heights Area Planning Committee voted 12-0-1 to not recommend initiation of a General/Community Plan amendment (see Attachment 1).

Environmental Impact – If initiated, the proposed plan amendment and future discretionary actions would 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 1.5-acre site for Residential 21 to 25 dwelling units per acre (see Attachment 2). Based on the existing land use designation, 31 to 38 dwelling units could potentially be developed. The request to redesignate the site to Commercial and Mixed-Use at 44 to 73 dwelling units per acre would allow the potential construction of 66 to 110 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 would 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 1.5-acre site located at 4260 54th Street, which is situated along the west side of 54th Street between Trojan Avenue and Orange Avenue within the City Heights area of the Mid-City Communities planning area (see Attachment 4). The site is currently occupied by a single-story Head Start area office. Surrounding land uses include residential, school, and commercial and mixed-use areas to the north, residential to the west, residential and park to the south, and residential to the east of 54th Street. Existing uses in the vicinity include Horace Mann Middle School, commercial, and single-family residences to the north, multi-family residential development and religious establishments to the west, Colina Del Sol Community Park and multi-family residential development to the south, and office, multi-family, and single-family residences to the east (see Attachment 5). The proposed land use designation would be similar to the existing Commercial and Mixed-Use land use designation located north of the site, which allows a residential density of 73 dwelling units per acre.

The applicant has requested a General/Community Plan Amendment to redesignate the site from Residential at 21 to 25 dwelling units per acre to Commercial and Mixed-Use at 44 to 73 dwelling units per acre to accommodate a 110-unit, mixed-use development consisting of a mixture of affordable for-sale and market-rate for-sale units and a commercial/office component. The site is currently zoned RM-1-3, which allows for multi-family residential development and permits a maximum density of 1 dwelling unit per 2,000 square feet of lot area. Based on the zoning, the site could accommodate up to 33 dwelling units. If initiated, the proposed General/Community Plan Amendment would be reviewed in conjunction with a request for a rezone and other required discretionary actions to be determined by the Development Services Department.

The proposed General/Community Plan Amendment Initiation request was heard at the July 6, 2005 City Heights Area Planning Committee (CHAPC) meeting. The planning group considered the proposed initiation request and voted not to support the initiation request with 12 members in favor of the motion, none opposed, and with 1 member abstaining. Although several members expressed that the initiation request could provide additional affordable housing opportunities, opinions expressed in opposition of the initiation dealt mainly with not supporting increased density in an area of the community that already had existing high residential density. Another concern that was expressed by the planning group related to the overcrowding of neighborhood schools in the area and the impact to these schools as a result of potential development and

increased residential density. If initiated, an analysis of existing residential densities in relation to the proposed land use amendment and the potential impact to surrounding schools would be analyzed as part of the General/Community Plan Amendment process.

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.

- 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.

- 47th/Fairmount Avenue

This 1.28-acre 47th/Fairmount Project proposed to develop seven single-family detached units south of Chollas Parkway between 47th Street and Fairmount Avenue within the community of City Heights. The project is proposing a General/Community Plan Amendment to redesignate the 1.28-acre site from Industrial to Residential 6 to 10 dwelling units per acre. The proposed General/Community Plan amendment process associated with this project was initiated by the Planning Commission on March 10, 2005, and is currently under review by City staff.

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 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 of schools, parks, transit, commercial, and employment centers. The Colina Del Sol Community Park, Jackson-Mann-Crawford educational complex, and the El Cajon Boulevard commercial corridor are within a 2,000 foot walking distance from the site. Furthermore, a transit stop for the 955 north-south transit route is located along the frontage of the site.

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 up to 110 dwelling units where none currently exist.

The Commercial Element of the community plan further recommends that the 54th Street Corridor between El Cajon Boulevard and University Avenue be developed as a center of civic and recreational activity, that encourages the establishment of cultural and non-profit organizations, artisans, hotels, professional offices and art galleries. The proposed Commercial and Mixed-Use designation would allow an opportunity for these types of uses to locate along 54th Street.

The Economic Development Element of the community plan also designates the area along 54th Street between El Cajon Boulevard and University Avenue as a larger urban node that should be fostered as a “Cultural Center.” The application of a commercial and mixed-use designation would expand opportunities for a combination of uses that would further supplement the mixture of institutional, commercial, and recreational uses contained within the larger urban node.

However, the proposed land use amendment could conflict with the community plan recommendation that calls for restricting multi-family development within the service boundaries of schools where the local student population exceeds 500 students for elementary schools, 1,000 students for middle schools, and 1,500 students for high schools as preferred by the Mid-City Communities Plan. Current 2005 enrollment figures for the local elementary, middle, and high school are: 878 for Jackson Elementary School, 1260 for Mann Middle School, and 1741 for the Crawford Educational Complex. At present, the new Mary Lanyon Fay Elementary School is scheduled for completion in the Fall of 2007 and will alleviate student overcrowding at the Marshall and Jackson Elementary Schools. As part of the proposed plan amendment process, the impact of the proposed land use change to the local elementary, middle, and high schools will be analyzed.

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

The proposed land use amendment would allow for the creation of additional market-rate and affordable housing for existing and future residents in the community. Additionally, the proposed land use amendment would serve to provide replacement housing within the City Heights area that were lost due to the siting and development of four new elementary schools in the community. As result of the construction of these new schools, a total of 637 housing units were removed from the City Heights housing inventory. The site is also located in the City Heights Redevelopment Project Area and would promote redevelopment and revitalization efforts in the surrounding area.

(3) Public services are available or are planned to be available to serve the proposed change 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 would be provided by the Mid-City Police Division and fire protection services would be provided by Fire Station 26, located approximately 1.3 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. The City Heights community currently remains deficient in park facilities, due to its development prior to the establishment of the General Plan population-based park standards.

The subject site is however, located within 600 feet of the Colina Del Sol Community Park and the joint use facilities at Horace Mann Middle School.

Additionally, near-term opportunities for increasing recreational areas will involve the construction of a total of four new elementary schools in City Heights by the end of 2007. These new schools are anticipated to include joint use agreements with the City and provide an additional 10 acres of improved park acreage. Further, two additional neighborhood parks, the 6-acre Home Avenue and 2-acre Fox Canyon Park sites are in the planning stages and are anticipated to assist in alleviating park deficiencies in City Heights. A 0.70-acre mini-park was recently approved as part of a development proposal and will be located at University Avenue and 52nd Street along the Auburn Park Branch of Chollas Creek. If initiated, any impacts to public services and facilities would be analyzed during review of the proposed amendment to ensure that facility needs generated by the proposal would be addressed. In addition, a concurrent amendment to the Mid-City Public Facilities Financing Plan may be included.

(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 Residential (21 to 25 dwelling units per acre) to Commercial and Mixed-Use (44 to 73 du/ac).

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 the City's General Plan and Strategic Framework Element and Transit-Oriented Development Design Guidelines
- Comparison of current and proposed land use for the project site
- Potential redesignation of a broader area than just the project site
- Analysis of surrounding multi-family residential densities
- Impacts of structure height(s), shade and shadow patterns associated with new development, 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
- 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 parks and 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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MPW/MIP

- Attachments:
1. City Heights Area Planning Committee (CHAPC) recommendation of July 6, 2005.
 2. Mid-City Communities Plan Land Use Map
 3. Aerial Location Map
 4. Proposed General/Community Plan Amendment
 5. Other General/Community Plan Amendments in progress
 6. Ownership Disclosure Statement