

DATE ISSUED: January 12, 2006 **REPORT NO. PC-06-009**

ATTENTION: **Planning Commission, Agenda of January 19, 2006**

SUBJECT: COLLEGE GROVE CONDOS- PROJECT NO. 56578. PROCESS 5

OWNER: Beacon Group, LLC. (Attachment 13)

APPLICANT: Project Design Consultants.

SUMMARY

Issue(s) – Should the Planning Commission recommend that the City Council approve a Rezone, Easement Vacation, Vesting Tentative Map, Planned Development Permit, and a Site Development Permit to construct a 45-unit condominium development on a 1.91-acre site located at 6420 College grove Drive?

Staff Recommendations:

1. Recommend to City Council **Certification** of Mitigated Negative Declaration No.56578 and **adoption** of the Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program;
2. Recommend to City Council **Approval** of Rezone No. 172908 (Attachment 7);
3. Recommend to City Council **Approval** of Vesting Tentative Map No.172907 and Easement Vacation No. 286913 (Attachment 8);
4. Recommend to City Council **Approval** of Planned Development Permit No.165297 and Site Development Permit No. 289473 (Attachments 9 and 10);

Community Planning Group Recommendation: On November 22, 2005the Eastern Area Planning Committee recommended unanimous approval of the project by a vote of 12-0-0with no conditions (Attachment 12).

Environmental Review: The City of San Diego as Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) has prepared and completed a Mitigated Negative Declaration, in accordance with the State of California CEQA Guidelines. Mitigation measures have been included for potentialimpacts to biological resources and for

potential noise impacts, which would reduce any impacts to below a level of significance.

Fiscal Impact: None with this action.

Code Enforcement Impact: None with this action.

Housing Impact Statement: According to the Mid-City Communities Plan, the project site is designated for residential development and could accommodate a maximum of 55 dwelling units on site. The proposed project would develop 45 market-rate, for-sale housing on a vacant site. Additionally, no affordable housing units are being proposed with this project. Per the City's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance, the applicant has selected to pay the in-lieu fee.

BACKGROUND

The project proposes to construct a 45-unit, multi-family, condominium development within eight detached buildings on a 1.91-acre parcel; located at 6420 College Grove Drive south of College Avenue (Attachment 1). The site is an irregular shape and currently vacant. The site contains environmentally sensitive lands in the form of non-native grasslands and coastal sage scrub, but does not contain natural steep slopes, nor is it located within or adjacent to the Multiple Habitat Planning Area.

The proposed project is located in the Eastern Area Community of Mid-City (Attachment 2). According to the Mid-City Communities Plan, the proposed 1.91-acre site is designated for Residential emphasizing both multi-family development at 26 to 30 dwelling units per acre and single-family development at 6 to 10 dwelling units per acre. The portion of the total project site consisting of approximately 1.76-acres could potentially develop 45 to 53 multi-family dwelling units. The proposed project consisting of 45 housing units meets the minimum density range in the community plan for this site. The remaining portion of the project site consisting of approximately 0.15-acres could potentially develop 1 to 2 single family dwelling units. However, due to the presence of an existing sewer easement that runs through the middle of this site and the need to preserve the 3 existing mature fig trees, no major development is proposed at this location other than the installation of a 10-foot wide non-contiguous sidewalk along College Grove Drive. The proposed rezone associated with this project, would rezone the project site from RM- 1 and RS-1-7 to RM-2-5and increase the maximum number of units allowed under the current zone from 27 dwelling units to 55 units.

The surrounding developments are single family military housing, to the west accessed off of College Grove Way. These properties are approximately 30 feet higher in elevation than the subject site's development pad. There is a shopping center to the east directly across from College Grove Drive located approximately five to ten feet lower in elevation. One-story single family homes abut the site to the north, accessed from Meridian Avenue cul-de sac. These homes are located about 20 feet higher in elevation. A City of San Diego public park, Chollas Creek Park, is located on College Grove Way and multifamily residential developments north and south of the site (Attachment 3).

DISCUSSION

Project Description:

The project proposes to construct a 45-unit condominium development consisting of eight, three-story buildings ranging from 2-units per building to 11-units per building. Each unit contains two bedrooms and two and half bathrooms with attached two-car garages, a private balcony or yard area. The development also contains common area surface parking for visitors and recreational area (Attachment 5). The architectural style proposed for the buildings is contemporary with the same floor plans (1,117 square feet in size each unit). A total of 90 parking spaces are required and a total of 98 parking spaces are proposed (90 within garages and eight surface spaces). Ingress and egress to the site is proposed from two new driveway s on College Grove Drive: One is restricted to emergency access only and the other for the residents and guests. The existing median would be modified to provide left turn access heading north bound from College Grove to the site.

The project proposes several amenities including a tot-lot within the interior of the site with trellis overhead, barbecue and picnic tables, a large green space area with benches and children's play equipment, as well as open space for units facing College Grove Drive.

The project has been revised since the initial submittal to incorporate features and site design elements to make the project more compatible with the existing land uses and development regulations per staff recommendation. These revisions include the provisions of a large and centrally located recreation area; pedestrian paths to the southwest corner with connection to the right-of-way, and building articulation along the front facades.

Project implementation requires the following approvals:

1. A rezone from RM-1-1 and RS-1-7 to RM-2-5.
2. An easement vacation to abandon a ten foot wide storm drain easement.
3. A Vesting Tentative Map for the condominium development.
4. A Planned Development Permit for the proposed deviation to the front and side yard setback and retaining wall height.
5. A Site Development Permit for potential impacts to the biological and paleontological resources.

Community Plan Analysis:

The proposed project currently meets the minimum density recommended by the Mid-City Communities Plan. Initially, at the direction of city staff the applicant was encouraged to meet the middle to high end range of the recommended residential density as well as to consider the

possibility of providing underground parking in order to provide more opportunities for housing within the project. However, since the provision of underground parking at this site was economically unfeasible for the applicant, a total of 48 units were originally proposed. During the course of development review, the 48-unit project was determined to be lacking in pedestrian orientation and functional open space areas. As a result, the project was reduced to 45 housing units. With this reduction, the project was able to incorporate a more centrally-located recreational area, improved internal pedestrian and vehicular circulation, enhanced pedestrian pathways and entryways into the project, and additional landscape areas

According to the Land Use Element of the community plan, the construction of new market-rate housing is encouraged to create opportunities for home ownership and to upgrade the overall value of housing stock in the community. The proposed project would meet this recommendation by developing 45 multi-family residential units which would be sold as market-rate condominiums. The community plan also recommends locating private off-street parking behind multi-family structures. Although, the greater portion of private on-site parking would be located within the garages of the residential units, there are seven surface parking spaces that front College Grove Drive. These parking stalls, which have been distributed at the northern and southern end of the project site, would be screened with 24-inch box trees and shrubs to reduce their visual impacts.

The proposed project would promote pedestrian orientation by providing a non-contiguous sidewalk along the project's frontage on College Grove Drive. Additionally, several 24-inch box street trees would also be provided along this frontage to allow for shade and heat mitigation. According to the Transportation Element of the community plan, direct pedestrian access should be provided from the sidewalk to the residential units. The proposed project would meet this recommendation by providing five-foot wide pathways from the sidewalk along College Grove Drive to several of the units that front the street. Additionally, pedestrian pathways are also proposed to provide general access into the development. These access points would be located to the south where there would be a meandering landscaped pathway with benches and midway along the project frontage on College Grove Drive where an entryway would provide direct access to the centrally located recreation area within the development. Internal pedestrian circulation within the project would consist mainly of five-foot wide walkways differentiated from the private drives with enhanced pavement. Several buildings within the project would also contain four-inch high rolled curbs along with five-foot wide walkway along their building frontages to allow for more exclusive separation between pedestrian and vehicular right-of-way. Due to the required 20-foot width for fire truck access, not all building frontages within the project would have rolled curbs.

In order to help address the provision of recreational amenities with new development, the project proposes a centrally located recreational area that contains picnic tables, barbecue facilities, and tot-lot. Other passive recreational amenities such as a small courtyard with seating and a wall fountain would be located east of the central recreation area and a landscaped, meandering pathway along with seating is proposed at the southern end of the project (Attachment 5c). The proposed project would also be located within walking distance of the Chollas Park and Recreation Center which is also located along College Grove Drive.

Environmental Analysis:

A Mitigated Negative Declaration has been prepared for the project for potential impacts to biological, paleontological resources, and for exterior noise levels. The development would impact 1.10 acres of non-native grassland habitat and 0.20 acres of coastal sage scrub. Impacts to 0.61 acres of ornamental vegetation are not considered significant, therefore no mitigation is required, however; mitigation measures are required for the potential impacts to non-native grasslands and coastal sage scrub. Project implementation requires that the applicant either acquire and dedicate similar biological resources off site or pay into the City's Habitat Acquisition fund to purchase the required acres for the impact or a combination thereof.

The project site is underlain by the San Diego formation. With respect to paleontological fossil resource potential, the San Diego Formation is assigned a high sensitivity in all areas where it occurs. Based on the sensitivity of the affected formation and the proposed excavation depths, the project could result in significant impacts to paleontological resources. To reduce this impact to below a level of significance, excavation within previously undisturbed formations at a depth of ten or more feet and exceeding 1,000 cubic yards of excavation would be monitored by a qualified paleontologist.

Mitigation is required for potential noise impacts due to the proximity of the development to College Grove Drive. An acoustical study identified potential traffic noise impacts to private balconies to buildings 2, 3, 4, and 7, and to the recreation area. Mitigation measures require a 3.5-foot solid sound attenuation barrier on each of the affected balconies and a 3-foot tall sound attenuation barrier along the southern edge of the "tot lot."

Project Related Issues:

Planned Development Permit Analysis (Deviations/Design Criteria /Open Space Requirements:

The purpose of the Planned Development Permit (PDP) regulations is to provide flexibility in the application of development regulations for projects where strict application of the base zone would limit design options and result in a less desirable project. The intent of the PDP regulations is to accommodate to the greatest extent possible, an equitable balance of development types, intensities, styles, site constraints, project amenities, public improvements, community and City benefits. The project was analyzed for consistency with the PDP regulations which allow for deviations where appropriate, include supplemental regulations for residential development, require conformance with underlying zone requirements to the greatest extent possible, and provide for extensive open space requirements.

Deviations:

A PDP is required for the project as the project proposes the following deviations as discussed below and depicted in Attachment 5a. Staff has determined that the property contains site constraints which warrant relief from certain development regulations and that the proposed development provides community benefits.

1. Front Yard Setback - 3'-0" where 15'-0" is the minimum required: The project proposes a three-foot front yard setback where a 15-foot setback is required. The project proposes six guest parking spaces observing a three-foot setback, where parking is not allowed in the front setback. Additionally, a small corner of building 3 and building 4 will observe a six-foot front yard at the closest point. Due to existing topographic constraints, placement of the guest parking spaces in front of the buildings is preferred over placing the parking spaces to the rear of the buildings. If the spaces were to be located to the rear of the buildings, it may increase the height of the retaining walls at the rear of the site. The buildings are proposed to be located at varying distances from the front property line ranging from 6 feet to 50 feet. The proposed configuration of the buildings allow for large off-setting planes to be incorporated into the site design. The project requires a four-foot dedication to bring the curb-to-property line up to current standards which further reduces the buildable area.

2. Side Yard Setback – 17'- 6" and 23'-0" where 25'-0" is required: The project proposes a building side yard setbacks of 17.5 feet and 23 feet where 25 feet is required. The existing lot is irregularly shaped and includes a large unusable panhandle portion that stretches north along College Grove Drive. Generally, the property line opposite the front property line is considered the rear property line and would be subject to a 15-foot rear yard setback. Due to the triangular shape of the lot, the side property lines are almost opposite from the front property line. The proposed setbacks of 17.5 feet and 23 feet are greater than the 15-foot setback that would be required if these yards were rear yards instead of side yards. The project does not propose any development within the unusable panhandle portion but rather proposes to encroach into the side yard setbacks to construct the development.

3. Retaining Wall Heights: 7'-0" to 16'-0" high in several side yard sections where 6'-0" maximum is permitted.

The project requires the construction of a series of building/retaining walls. Buildings 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7 would be constructed at the base of the northern and western embankment. Retaining walls have been incorporated into the design of these buildings to allow for encroachment into the ascending slopes. Between these buildings within four areas, a small segment of retaining walls will reach a maximum height of 16 feet due the topography and site constraints. These walls would be planted with landscape materials and, when the plant material reaches maturity, will have the appearance of continuing the natural slope. The walls will not be visible from the public-right-of-way as they will be screened by the proposed buildings. These walls will also facilitate the construction of a parking area between buildings 2 and 5, and a seating area between buildings 6 and 7, located directly west of the larger recreation area. At the southeast corner of the site, a maximum seven-foot high, terraced retaining wall is proposed. This area will accommodate a grassy pedestrian walkway connecting the property to College Grove Drive.

The project has been designed to provide pedestrian paths and entries to the units that front the street directly from the right-of-way. The project proposes a town house design that provides a transition from the single family neighborhood to the west to the commercial shopping center to the east. The site grading reduces the height appearance of the project from the adjacent single family neighborhood. The project proposes a centrally located recreation area with a tot lot, picnic tables and barbeques. This recreation area is located to allow for easy access for all

dwellings. The project includes pedestrian paths that connect most units directly to the College Grove Drive, the recreation area, and to the sidewalk that is nearest to Chollas Community Park. The pedestrian paths include enhanced paving with exposed aggregate banding. The project includes permeable paving and decorative paving at the guest parking spaces and on one driveway. The project provides non-contiguous sidewalks along the project frontage where the majority of the neighborhood provides standard sidewalks.

Therefore staff supports the deviations and recommends approval of the proposed deviations.


PDP Design Criteria:

The PDP ordinance contains additional criteria for developments as well as supplemental regulations for residential development. The criteria for development regulations require that the overall design of developments be comprehensive and demonstrate the relationship between on-site and off-site developments. Structures should avoid repetitious patterns that are inconsistent with the goals of the land use plan. The scale of the developments should be consistent with the neighborhood and should represent the dominant development pattern in the area or, as called for in the community plan. Landscaping should be used to soften the appearance of blank walls and enhance the pedestrian scale of the development. Parking areas and access drives should be located to avoid conflicts with internal pedestrian circulation, street systems, and adjacent properties.

The project has been designed to locate the vehicle parking inside garages and vehicle circulation area towards the interior of the site. The project proposes pedestrian walkways connecting the right-of-way to each of the dwelling unit entries and recreation area. Dwelling unit entries are located on the opposite side of the building, which reduces pedestrian traffic across private driveways. The scale of the project is consistent with the neighborhood scale.

The architectural style the applicant has chosen is contemporary. The five features of the contemporary style that have been incorporated in the design of the development include: multiple pitched roofs, one chimney per three dwelling units, front entry porches along College Grove Drive, planted wall mounted lattice with plants and recessed windows. The above mentioned articulations help to diminish building bulk. The development has been divided into eight buildings with architectural features such as offsetting planes to help diminish the appearance of a large scale development site.

PDP Open Space Requirements:

The PDP regulations have both “total” (common) and “usable” (private) open space requirements. For sites zoned RM-2-5, 190 square feet of both total and usable open space is required. The project exceeds the open spaces requirements as shown below and graphically depicted on (Attachment 5 )

Total/Usable Open Space:

Required: 8,550 square feet, or 190 square feet per unit
Provided: 12,397 square feet, or 275 square feet per unit

Open space areas for the proposed project includes private balconies, private ground floor yard areas, the large landscaped tot lot/green space area within the interior of the development, four barbeque and landscaped areas in front of the units facing College Grove Drive, and a passive open landscaped area on the western portion of the site with benches along the walkway that connects to the public right-of-way.

Other open space area provided on the site but not included towards the calculation include the panhandle portion of the lot and the sloped area behind buildings which provide an additional 22,256 square feet of open space.

In summary, the proposed project is consistent with the purpose and intent of the Planned Development Permit ordinance requesting minor deviations to the development regulations and incorporating the design criteria for residential developments. The project will provide several benefits to the City. The project will provide additional housing stock for the community. It will visually enhance the site through new buildings and increased landscaped areas within the site and along College Grove Drive along project frontage. The property is currently vacant and has been used to dump debris and other materials. The project will upgrade the site through the requirement for a street dedication in order to provide a curb-to-property-line distance that meets current standards. The proposed development will implement several goals and recommendations of the community plan as outlined in this report.

Easement Vacation:

The project requires the vacation of one easement within the site. The existing easement does not contain any reserved active public utilities, therefore, the original purpose for which it was required will not be affected by the vacation. There are also no prospective uses for this easements, and no other public use is anticipated. The easement will be re-routed into the new private drive.

CRITICAL PROJECT FEATURES TO CONSIDER DURING SUBSTANTIAL CONFORMANCE REVIEW

Land Use: The project site shall not adversely affect the Progress Guide, General Plan, Community Plan and remain consistent with the Planned Development Permit Ordinance. Any changes from the proposed land use should be reviewed to ensure conformance with the applicable land use plan and the San Diego Municipal Code.

Site Design: The project design should not increase the amount of deviation from the development regulations of the underlying zone, unless the required findings could be made. The location of the buildings shall be maintained in place as shown on Exhibit "A."

Parking/Circulation: Parking spaces shall not be reduced unless there is a reduction in the number of units. Any changes made to the parking and or conversion for any other use shall be reviewed by the Development Services Department.

Landscaping: Landscape material, size, number and location shall be consistent with Exhibit "A." Any changes to the landscape plan should be reviewed to ensure conformance with the San Diego Municipal Code.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed development was analyzed for conformance with the relevant regulations of the Mid City-Communities Planned District and found to be in compliance with those regulations as permitted through the Planned Development Permit process. The proposed development will visually enhance the existing site and the immediate area by providing a high quality residential development consistent with the community plan recommendations. The project implements several goals, objectives and recommendations of the Eastern Area community of the Mid-City Communities Plan and the Progress Guide and General Plan as described in this report. Staff recommends approval of the project.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Recommend, with modifications, Approval to the City Council of the Rezone No.172908, Easement Vacation No. 286913 Vesting Tentative Map No. 172907 Planned Development Permit No. 165297 and Site Development Permit No. 289473.
2. Recommend Denial to the City Council of the Rezone No.172908 Easement Vacation No. 286913 Vesting Tentative Map No. 172907 and Planned Development Permit No. 165297 Site Development Permit No. 289473. If the findings required to approve the project cannot be affirmed.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey D. Strohminger,
Acting Deputy Director
Customer Support and Information
Division, Development Services Department

Nilia Koering
Development Project Manager
Development Services Department

JDS/NK

Attachments:

1. Community Plan Land Use Map
2. Project Location Map
3. Aerial Map of Surrounding Development/Existing Zoning
4. Existing site condition photographs
5. Project Plans (5a. Deviations Exhibit; 5b. Open Space Exhibit, 5c. landscape)
6. Retaining Wall Section/Rendering
7. Rezone Ordinance (7a: Rezone Exhibit)
8. Vesting Tentative Map Resolution
9. Draft PDP/SDP Permit
10. Draft PDP/SDP Resolution
11. Streetscape Rendering
12. Community Planning Group Recommendation
13. Ownership Disclosure Statement
14. Project Chronology
15. Project Data Sheet