

**DATE ISSUED:** May 12, 2006

**REPORT NO. PC-06-110**

**ATTENTION:** **Planning Commission, Agenda of May 18, 2006**

**SUBJECT:** 2605 HIGHLAND AVENUE TENTATIVE MAP; PROJECT NO. 87008  
PROCESS FOUR

**OWNERS:** Johnny Cruse and Cindy Cruse (Attachment 8)

**APPLICANT:** Westone Management Consultants

**SUMMARY**

**Issue:** Should the Planning Commission approve a Tentative Map for the conversion of 10 existing residential units to condominiums at 2605 Highland Avenue, within the City Heights Neighborhood of the Mid-City Communities Plan Area ?

**Staff Recommendation:**

1. **Approve** Tentative Map No. 276544and
2. **Approve** waiver to the requirement to underground existing overhead utilities.

**Community Planning Group Recommendation:** On April 6, 2006, the City Heights Area Planning Group voted 9-4-0 to deny this project with recommendations as detailed within this report (Attachment 7).

**Environmental Review:** This project is exempt from environmental review pursuant to Article 19, Section 15301(k), Existing Facilities, of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This project is not pending an appeal of the environmental determination. The environmental exemption determination for this project was made on December 1, 2005, and the opportunity to appeal that determination ended December 22, 2005.

**Fiscal Impact Statement:** None with this action. All costs associated with the processing of this project are paid by the applicant.

**Code Enforcement Impact:** None with this action.

**Housing Impact Statement:** With the proposed conversion of 10 existing apartments to condominiums, there would be a loss of 10 rental units and a gain of 10 for-sale units. This condominium conversion project was deemed complete on November 8, 2005 and is therefore subject to the new regulations regarding Inclusionary housing and tenant relocation assistance.

## **BACKGROUND**

The 0.16-acre project site is located at 2605 Highland Avenue and is within the RM-1-1 zone of the City Heights Neighborhood of the Mid-City Communities Plan Area. (Attachment 3). The site is presently developed with 1, two-story structure containing 10, one-bedroom units. Ten off-street parking spaces are provided on the site: 5 spaces are accessed from Highland Avenue at the front and five are accessed from the alley at the rear. The site is bounded on all sides by multi-family residential uses.

The existing improvements were constructed in 1972. At the time the site was zoned R-4 and would have allowed for 18 dwelling units. The 10 parking spaces provided complied with the parking requirements in effect at the time of construction. The site is currently within the RM-1-1 Zone of the Central Urbanized Communities Planned District, which would allow 2 units to be constructed on the subject site (1 unit per 3,000 sq/ft of lot area). Utilizing current parking standards, 15 spaces would be required. The development complied with the zoning and development regulations in effect at the time of construction and no Building or Zoning code violations have been recorded against the property.

Although the project does not conform with the current maximum density of two units and provides 10 parking spaces where 15 are currently required, the project has previously-conforming rights to be maintained as outlined in Chapter 12, Article 7, Division 1 of the Land Development Code.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Project Description:**

The project proposes a Tentative Map for the subdivision of a 0.16-acre site to convert 10 existing dwelling units into condominiums on three existing lots (Attachment 5). The applicant is also requesting that the requirement for the undergrounding of existing overhead utilities be waived.

Section 125.0410 of the San Diego Municipal Code (SDMC) requires that a Tentative Map be processed for the subdivision of land. According to SDMC Sections 125.0440 and 125.0444,

*Findings for Tentative Maps and for Condominium Conversions*, the decisionmaker may approve a Tentative Map for the purposes of the conversion of residential property into a condominium project if the decisionmaker finds that the proposed conversion complies with the requirements of the Subdivision Map Act and the San Diego Municipal Code. Staff has reviewed the proposed condominium conversion and determined that it complies with both the Subdivision Map Act and the San Diego Municipal Code.

#### Undergrounding of Existing Utilities

San Diego Municipal Code Section 144.0240 allows the subdivider to apply for a waiver from the requirement to underground the existing overhead utilities within the boundary of the subdivision or within the abutting public rights of way. City staff has determined the undergrounding waiver request qualifies under the guidelines of Council Policy 600-25, *Underground Conversion of Utility Lines at the Developer's Expense*, the conversion involves a short span of overhead facility (less than 600 feet in length) and the conversion would not represent a logical extension to an underground facility.

The applicant will be required to underground all existing service to the site per Condition No. 19 of the draft Tentative Map resolution (Attachment 6). The applicant would also be required to underground any new service run to any new or proposed structures within the subdivision per Condition No. 4 of the draft Tentative Map resolution (Attachment 6).

The neighborhood currently contains power poles and overhead utilities lines on the alley. The utility lines to these poles extend to other properties located north and south within the alley. The pole closest to this property, which carries the line serving this site, is located within the rear alley right-of-way, approximately 5 feet south of this site. As indicated above, all utilities serving this property will be required to be undergrounded. The waiver is being requested for the requirement to underground adjacent utilities serving the surrounding properties. The City's Undergrounding Master Plan for Fiscal Year 2006 designates the site within Block 3J, and the date for undergrounding has been established for the year 2032 (Attachment 10).

#### **Community Planning Group and Neighborhood Recommendations:**

On April 6, 2006, the City Heights Area Planning Group voted 9-4-0 to deny this project with recommendations and an explanation for the denial as detailed below. (Attachment 7).

Per the Chair, "The Committee seated new members at this meeting, and there were six persons who had not yet become familiar with the Committee's purpose and procedures. In view of that, the staff might, in forming the staff recommendation, consult earlier Committee action in cases similar to this one, wherein the experienced members of the Committee recommended approval of the Tentative Map waiver, disapproval of the waiver of utility undergrounding, installation of the street address number on the rear of the building, and installation of motion-sensitive alley floodlighting. A staff recommendation which notes the Committee's usual actions in similar cases might be suitable."

1. No waiver or exemption from state and local requirements that existing utility services for this property be placed underground be granted. *Based on the preceding information regarding the undergrounding of the existing utilities, staff continues to support the undergrounding waiver request*
2. Installation of motion sensitive rear lighting to light the alley at night. *The applicant has voluntarily agreed to install motion sensitive lighting in the alley.*
3. Installation of the street address at the rear of the all buildings, in large numbers. *The applicant has voluntarily agreed to install the street address at the rear of the all buildings, in large numbers.*

**Project-Related Issues:**

The requested conversion of these residential units to condominiums represents primarily a change in ownership. The applicant has certified that the required 60-day Notices of Intent to Convert to Condominiums were provided to the June 22, 2005 (Attachment 11).

All condominium conversion projects Deemed Complete on or after February 7, 2004, must conform with the new regulations regarding Inclusionary housing and tenant relocation benefits adopted by the City Council on March 15, 2004. This proposed project was Deemed Complete on November 8, 2005, and is therefore subject to these new regulations. The project has been conditioned to require the subdivider conform with the City's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance (Chapter 14, Article 2, Division 13 of the Land Development Code) and demonstrate conformance with the Municipal Code provisions for Tenant Relocation Benefits (Chapter 14, Article 4, Division 5) to the satisfaction of the City Manager and the Housing Commission, prior to the recordation of the Final Map.

The applicant has elected to pay an in-lieu fee of \$15,750.00 (6,300 square feet x \$ 2.50) to satisfy the Inclusionary Housing requirement, as allowed by the City's Inclusionary Housing Ordinance (Chapter 14, Article 2, Division 13 of the Land Development Code).

**Conclusion:**

Staff has reviewed the request for a Tentative Map for the conversion of 10 residential units into condominiums and has found the project to be in conformance with the applicable sections of the San Diego Municipal Code regulating Tentative Maps. Staff believes the requirement findings can be supported and recommends the Planning Commission approve the project as proposed.

**ALTERNATIVES**

1. **Approve Tentative Map No. 276544with modifications.**
2. **Deny Tentative Map No. 276544if the findings required to approve the project cannot be affirmed.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

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**Mike Westlake**  
**Program Manager**

**Development Services Department**

WESTLAKE/ROM  
Attachments:

1. Aerial Photograph
2. Community Plan Land Use Map
3. Project Location Map
4. Project Data Sheet
5. Tentative Map
6. Draft Map Conditions and Subdivision Resolution
7. Community Planning Group Recommendation
8. Ownership Disclosure Statement
9. Project Chronology
10. City's Underlying Master Plan – Map 3J
11. Sample of 60-Day Notice of Intent to Convert
12. Photos of Existing Front and Rear Elevations

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**Renee Mezo**  
**Customer Support and  
Information Division**  
**Development Services Department**