

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL

DATE: JULY 24, 2006

FROM: CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: 220 N. SAN RAFAEL AVENUE—PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT FROM INSTITUTIONAL TO LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL; ZONE CHANGE FROM PS (PUBLIC AND SEMI-PUBLIC) TO RS-2-HD (RESIDENTIAL SINGLE-FAMILY 2 DWELLING UNITS PER NET ACRE—HILLSIDE DISTRICT OVERLAY); TWO PARCEL SUBDIVISION AND VARIANCE FOR LOT WIDTH

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council, following a public hearing:

1. Adopt the Initial Environmental Study and Negative Declaration (ATTACHMENT E);
2. Adopt the De Minimis Impact Finding on the State Fish and Wildlife Habitat (ATTACHMENT F);
3. Adopt the findings that the proposed General Plan Amendment is consistent with the General Plan and approve a Land Use Diagram Map Amendment from Institutional to Low-Density Residential (0-6 dwelling units/net acre) (ATTACHMENT A);
4. Adopt the findings that the proposed Zone Change is consistent with the Zoning Code and approve a Zoning Map Amendment from PS (Public And Semi-Public) to RS-2-HD (Single-Family Residential/2 du/net acre-Hillside District Overlay) (ATTACHMENT A);
5. Adopt findings that the variance for lot width submitted with the revised parcel map application, that there are exceptional circumstances and conditions applicable to the subject site that do not apply generally to sites in the same zoning district; and approve the variance for lot width (ATTACHMENT A).

6. Find that the proposed two-parcel subdivision is consistent with the goals, objectives, policies, and land uses of the general plan and the Pasadena Municipal Code Titles 16 and 17 and approve the proposed subdivision and conditions, and
7. Direct the City Attorney to prepare a resolution amending the official Land Use Diagram established by Section 2.105.110 of the Municipal Charter for the General Plan amendment from Institutional to Low-Density Residential (0-6 du/acre).
8. Direct the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance to change the existing zoning from PS (Public/Semi-Public District) to RS-2-HD (Single-family Residential (2 du/net acre/Hillside District Overlay) within 60 days.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On January 25, 2006, the Planning Commission recommended that the City Council 1) adopt the staff recommendations on the environmental analysis and the General Plan, Zoning Map Amendments; and deny the variance for lot width, and 2) deny both proposals to subdivide the property. The applicant was not asked to return to the Planning Commission with additional information. However, since the public hearing, the applicant has developed a potential development concept, including footprints, to facilitate discussion of the proposed subdivision.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On November 7, 2005, the Historic Preservation Commission 1) acknowledged that the proposed project would maintain the Charles Richter Laboratory and garage; and 2) found that the proposed General Plan, Zoning Map Amendments and two-parcel subdivision would not result in an adverse impact to the historic resources on site; and 3) recommended approval of the proposed General Plan and Zoning Map Amendments.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A proposal has been submitted to covert the Charles Richter Laboratory site, a seismology lab with garage, to single-family residential use. The site is currently zoned Public/Semi-Public (PS). In addition, to a zone change, the proposal requires a variances and subdivision approval to split the parcel into two single-family lots.

The applicant has presented two development lot split scenarios. The first scenario (Map 1) proposed a new driveway approach on a newly created lot located at the north end of the existing parcel, while the second (Map 2) would provide shared access through the existing monumental driveway for two parcels. Both scenarios were rejected by the Planning Commission. They rejected both alternatives stating that they could not make a determination without more information regarding proposed development of the site. Further development information is not required, however, until the property owner submits an application for a Hillside Development Permit. The

applicant has since developed a potential development concept, including footprints, to facilitate discussion of the proposed subdivision but has not filed for formal analysis.

Staff initially recommended to the Planning Commission approval of the project with a second driveway access at the north end of the site (Map 1). Since the presentation to Planning Commission, staff is recommending the scenario that shares the existing driveway (Map 2). The proposed project furthers the General Plan policies and objectives by ensuring that the character of the existing single-family neighborhood would be protected by implementing zoning standards designed to ensure compatibility. In addition, all proposed new development would be reviewed under the Hillside Development Permit (HDP) process as required for new residential development in the Hillside Overlay Zone.

BACKGROUND:

The project site is located on San Rafael Avenue between Los Altos Drive and Chateau Road, across from the Annandale Country Club. Located on the property are the reinforced concrete research facility and garage built and operated by Caltech for Drs. Charles Richter and Beno Gutenberg. The two scientists used the site as the primary laboratory to study seismology. The Council designated the laboratory and accessory garage as an historic monument on April 3, 2006. The site is characterized by a narrow canyon with steep, heavily wooded hillside terrain. The project site is surrounded by single-family development on large parcels in excess of 20,000 square feet.

There are four concurrent discretionary actions associated with the proposed project. The first action is a General Plan Amendment to change the existing Institutional general plan designation to Low Density Residential (0-6 du/net acre). The second action is a Zoning Map Amendment to change the existing zoning from PS (Public/Semi-Public District) to RS-2-HD (Single-family Residential/ 2 du/net acre, Hillside District Overlay). The third action is a proposed subdivision to split the existing 129,718 square-foot parcel into two lots—Lot A would measure approximately 104,108 square feet; Lot B would measure approximately 25,610 square feet. The final action is a variance to create Lot A and B with less than the minimum required lot width of 100 feet.

No new structures are included in this current proposal, although the impact of single-family residential development on two parcels was analyzed in the Initial Study. The existing laboratory and garage would remain on-site in their current state until proposed reuse is reviewed under a Hillside Development Permit.

ANALYSIS:

General Plan Amendment

The current proposal would change the land use designation from Institutional to Low-Density Residential (0-6 dwelling units/net acre). The proposed designation would be consistent with the General Plan designation with most of the properties in the vicinity. Objective 7 of the General Plan (Residential Neighborhoods) states the goal of preserving the character and scale of Pasadena's established residential neighborhoods. The existing development pattern in the neighborhood is one of low-density, single-family residential development on lots in excess of 20,000 square feet. The proposed General Plan Amendment would provide consistency as the property transitions to new uses in that the same set of zoning requirements will be applied to the project site as to adjacent properties. For these reasons, staff recommends approval of the General Plan Amendment to Low-Density Residential based on the findings contained herein.

Zoning Map Amendment

The current proposal would change the zoning designation from PS (Public/Semi-Public) to RS-2-HD [Single-Family Residential (2 du/net acre)/Hillside Overlay District]. The existing development pattern in the neighborhood is one of low-density, single-family residential development on lots in excess of 20,000 square feet. The proposed designation would be consistent with the Zoning Map designation with most of the properties in the vicinity. The nearest other parcel zoned open space is the Annandale Country Club.

As with the General Plan Amendment, the proposed Zoning Map Amendment would apply the same set of zoning requirements to the project site as to adjacent properties. For these reasons, staff recommends approval of the Zoning Map Amendment to Single-Family Residential/Hillside Overlay District based on the findings presented in this report.

Variance Application

The current proposal (Map 2) would create two parcels with direct access from San Rafael Avenue via one access point—a shared driveway incorporating the existing monumental entry pilasters and decorative wrought iron gate. The resulting lot split would create two lots, with the width of the street frontage shared between the two parcels and each less than the required 100-foot width. This lot configuration results in the need for a variance for the lot width of both lots. The RS-2-HD development standards require a minimum 100-foot width measured at a line 25 feet into the lot and perpendicular to the public right-of-way. The proposed width of Lot A and B is approximately 65 feet each. However, both lots would still exceed the minimum required lot size of 20,000 square feet.

The parcel map before the Council is a revision to the application filed in November 2005. The original subdivision proposal (Map 1), filed in July 2005, depicted the second lot at the northwest corner of the project site with frontage along San Rafael Avenue north of Chateau Road. The original map was designed around a flat ridge top adjacent to San Rafael Avenue that could serve as the location of development. During the review process, staff received comments from adjacent property owners who expressed concern with regard to adding an additional driveway access to San Rafael above Chateau Road. Adjacent property owners expressed the opinion that one additional driveway access would create dangerous road conditions. In response, the applicant modified the proposed parcel map to address these concerns and these changes resulted in the need for a variance.

In the presentation to the Planning Commission on January 25, 2006, staff did not support Map 2 because it potentially required more tree removal (18 protected trees) than Map 1 (five protected trees) and there appeared to be additional lot division options that would not require a variance to development standards. However, further analysis has revealed that the alternatives, including Map 1, would require significant grading and/or tree removal making them less desirable alternatives.

The potential building pad in Map 2 is in a location that would require minimal grading as the potential pad site is relatively flat. Furthermore, the granting of the variance for lot width does not change the other underlying zoning requirements—the RS-2-HD standards will still be applicable to new development. In addition, the current design of the proposed subdivision balances the concerns of the property owners immediately adjacent to the subject property with the interests of the applicant. In consideration of these facts, staff is now recommending approval of the variance for lot width based on the findings presented with this report.

Subdivision Application

The RS-2-HD zoning standards allow for the creation of as many as four lots. However, only two are proposed. The proposed subdivision would split the existing 129,718 square-foot parcel into two lots—Parcel A would measure approximately 104,108 square feet; Parcel B would measure approximately 25,610 square feet. Both parcels would exceed most of the minimum development standards of the RS-2-HD zone district. Furthermore, there exists sewer and water lines available to support the creation of one new parcel. Standard conditions of approval require the applicant of the development to cover the cost of upgrades necessary to support new development. For the reasons discussed above, staff recommends approval of the two parcel subdivision.

Hillside Development Review Required

In addition to the single-family residential development standards, the project site would be subject to the provisions of the Hillside Overlay District. The purpose of the overlay district is to provide development standards that promote orderly development consistent with the traditional scale and character of the community in hillside areas,

and that preserve privacy and views. New homes subject to a Hillside Development Permit (HDP) must be designed with consideration of the character and scale of the existing development in the vicinity. Through the Hillside Development Permit process, compatibility will be determined following a review of existing site conditions, visibility of the site, and the size, scale, and character of existing development within 500 feet of the site. The HDP standards and process will ensure that the design, location, and size of proposed structures at the time development is applied for will be compatible with existing and anticipated future development on adjacent lots and in terms of aesthetics, character, scale, and view protection.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

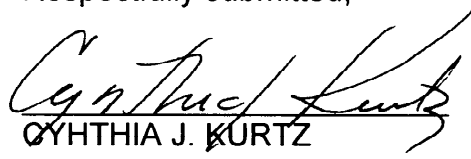
Staff prepared an Initial Environmental Study (IS) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines, (see Attachment E.) The draft Initial Study evaluates potential environmental effects that may result from rezoning and development of the project site. Included with the Initial Study is a biological constraints analysis and soils report as required under the Hillside Development Permit application for new development in the hillside areas of the City. Based on this analysis, staff proposes adoption of a Negative Declaration. The staff analysis found that reuse of the project site for single-family uses would not exceed the thresholds of significance for any of the study criteria analyzed in the Initial Study. The Initial Study was revised to reflect the proposed changes as submitted by the applicant. The conclusion of the revised IS also recommends a Negative Declaration because the development impacts remain at a level of insignificance and have not intensified under the revised proposal.

Assuming the proposed project is permitted, new residential development would be further scrutinized under the Hillside Development Permit process. Development impacts related to tree removal would be evaluated through review of a landscape plan that demonstrated equal or greater creation of canopy volume and coverage for each protected tree removed.

FISCAL IMPACT

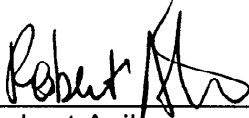
If the project is approved, fiscal impacts will be related to the staff time necessary to process and review plans submitted for building permits. Compensation for staff time will be recovered through planning and building permit fees. There will be no fiscal impact associated with the disapproval of this application.

Respectfully submitted,




CYTHIA J. KURTZ
City Manager

Prepared by:



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Approved by:



Richard J. Bruckner
Director of Planning and Development

- ATTACHMENT A—Findings of Fact
- ATTACHMENT B—Conditions of Approval
- ATTACHMENT C—Memorandum - City Of Pasadena, Department Of Public Works
- ATTACHMENT D—Memorandum - City Of Pasadena, Department Of Transportation
- ATTACHMENT E—Initial Environmental Study and Negative Declaration
- ATTACHMENT F—De Minimis Impact Finding on the State Fish and Wildlife Habitat
- ATTACHMENT G—Vicinity Zoning Map
- ATTACHMENT H—Proposed Parcel Map
- ATTACHMENT I—Tax Payer Protection Amendment Disclosure